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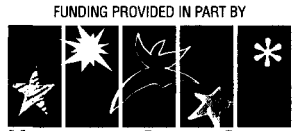

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EDITH KURZWEIL

Facts and Fictions About the Holocaust

THE STUDIES AND DEBATES about the Holocaust have become a cottage industry. Films, such as *Life is Beautiful* and *Schindler's List* have trivialized it, and turned it into kitsch. But the question remains whether all this publicity has reduced, or augmented, anti-Semitism in the Western world. In 1945, when pictures of skeletal survivors behind barbed wire, pits of cadavers, and the smoking chimneys of death camps were first shown, everyone sensed that the boundaries of human evil had scaled new heights, and would have to be forcefully reined in. That there was relatively little public mention of the Holocaust, and so few memoirs were published.

Since that time, commemorations, books, and television series have kept the Holocaust in the public eye. More and more aged survivors have been bearing witness, and have supplied ever more raw material for historians and writers—who keep asking how such an unprecedented crime could have come about. But the focus differs from country to country, even though philosophers, psychoanalysts, and social scientists at international meetings have delved into the conscious and unconscious motives of Germans. While arguing about what Hannah Arendt called the banality of evil, they keep searching for the Holocaust's ultimate meaning. Clichéd truisms and monocausal theses abound.

Still, what meaning could the systematic murder of six million Jews possibly have? Did we need this mass killing to learn that "such an event must never happen again?" Whether an accident or aberration of German history, a natural culmination of inherent German anti-Semitism, or the result of the fall-out of the Versailles treaty, every inquiry, itself, rests on the researchers' underlying beliefs and politics. Indeed, each country's discourse—German, French, American, and so on—though internally differentiated, has its own rationale.

Some Germans still blame the atrocities on the relatively few extreme anti-Semites who were condemned at the Nuremberg trials—which are contradicted by the tales of countless individuals' acts of brutality and needless cruelty. Testimonies by Hitler's victims, in turn, may have

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induced (former) Nazis to argue that these tales were exaggerated, to quibble that the number of victims was below six million, and to recall that political enemies, homosexuals, and handicapped Germans had been put into concentrations camps even before the Jews. (This sort of relativizing fails to account for the fact that the automated killing fields were being built later on, and outside German borders.) But some Germans who held that "camp workers" were simply following orders often fudged the moral line between victims and perpetrators. Primo Levi answered them categorically, that in the camps it had been clear that he was a guiltless victim, and that his jailers were murderers. Questions about bystanders, whether or not they could have or had wanted to intervene—early on when it might have been possible, or later when it was more dangerous—remain murky, as does the history of hindsight that asks, for instance, why the Americans didn't bomb the railroad tracks to Auschwitz, why Red Cross teams of inspectors allowed themselves to be duped by SS-supervised tours, and why German and Austrian Jews did not foresee their doom. Still, the more current perceptions are replacing the realities of what some French have come to call the *univers concentrationnaire*, as more survivors have felt compelled to erect museums and monuments, and to sanctify the ground of former death camps.

•••

In May 1945, the world asked how the descendants of Schiller and Goethe could have invented such a "machinery of death." At that time, there was too much suffering and misery, and too many intractable problems to solve to fully focus on the fate of the camp survivors: the Allies had to set up the United Nations, had to decide on the rules for bringing the top Nazi brass to trial, had to check the spread of communism and other totalitarianisms, had to help reconstruct the economies of a war-ravaged continent, and so on. Since the Europeans, whose countries had been devastated, had to rebuild their cities and keep their populations warm and minimally fed, the future of survivors was held in relative abeyance. Indeed, intra-European issues, such as keeping Germany down without shutting it out, getting along with the Soviets and the Americans in the aftermath of the Yalta agreements, and avoiding age-old ethnic squabbles and wars, preoccupied politicians and populations. Anti-Semitism remained strong, but mostly was swept beneath various rugs. The G.I.'s dollar bills and Hershey bars became the prevailing currency,

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even as Americans would be derided for their naïveté and uncouth manners.

Under the circumstances, survivors of death camps and death marches were housed in refugee camps until they found relatives, or induced the Red Cross and other helping agencies to relocate them. Most Nazi perpetrators hardened their already thick skins and grew new hides; and bystanders protested their innocence and denied that they had seen what they saw. All around, Europeans in one way or another were concentrating on the future: victims didn't talk much about the brutalities and fears they wanted to forget; perpetrators did not admit their collaboration and culpability. Thus the "unspeakable" was silenced. But it continued to weigh on people's minds, especially on those of relatives who had escaped, and who would have nightmares about their dead to the end of their lives.

Already before 1945, the American government had wondered about how to deal with Germany after the war, and had consulted psychoanalysts and psychologists to explain what might have induced Germans to so submissively follow Hitler. It took until the early 1970s for motivational explanations to lose some of their hold. By then, Stanley Milgram had shown that Germans were not the only ones to blindly follow orders; the leading Frankfurt scholars, Horckheimer and Adorno, who had investigated the roots of anti-Semitism, had moved back to Frankfurt, and Germany was flourishing. In the early seventies, as a number of archives were being opened, historians, journalists and sociologists began to delve into the grim details of the Nazi years. Had Hitler foreseen the eradication of the Jews when he outlined the creation of a master race? Or, as Saul Friedländer held, didn't *Mein Kampf* (1922) just serve as a part of the Germans' "völkish" ideology and provide the backdrop for the genocide of Jews and Gypsies? Friedländer maintained that the Holocaust was unique and could not be properly understood.

Raymond Aron, on the other hand, contended that if Hitler's primary aim had been the liquidation of the Jews then it was not irrational, for instance, to divert trains needed for the armed forces in order to transport Jews to Auschwitz. Arno Mayer, an outspoken Marxist, in *Why Did the Heavens Not Darken: The "Final Solution" in History* (1988), argued that Hitler's anti-communism was as virulent as his anti-Semitism, especially toward the end of the war. Other historians, then, compared the Nazis' anti-Semitism to Italian fascists' treatment of Africans and Slavs. Elie Wiesel, probably the most famous survivor of Auschwitz, has argued that the Holocaust was a unique occurrence, but nevertheless must be invoked against whatever

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atrocities around the world are in the offing, or being committed. In *And the Sea Is Never Full: Memoirs, 1969* (2000), he tells of his lifelong involvement in high-level world politics, and how he has been building bridges. Still, Lawrence Langer, in *Preempting the Holocaust* (1998) reminds us of the challenge the Holocaust poses when we try to incorporate it into our moral or historical intuitions. For, "unlike Dante, whose physical and spiritual journey changed a pilgrim into a poet with a comprehensive epic that could portray and transcend the corruption of his time, the student of the Holocaust has no comparable hierarchic image to reflect its complexity."

• • •

As more and more tangible information became available, academics discussed whether, and if so when, Hitler had personally ordered the extermination of the Jews (no written documents were found); when and by whom instructions for the "final solution" had been handed down (before, after, or at the then-secret Wannsee conference on January 20, 1942); how many Jews, Poles, and communists had been worked and/or starved to death; and so on. Initially, the answers were sought in the numbers, in fixing responsibilities on such leaders as Goering or Göbbels, Heydrich or Himmler, and in questioning what each of them actually had known, and at what point. (For some Germans, it has been argued, shifting the blame away from Hitler allowed him to remain an idealized figure.) At the time, most of the investigators were Americans. But soon, German, Israeli, and French historians enlarged the framework, adding a sort of national style to the explorations. This is not to say that these scholars were being chauvinistic, or trying to put their own citizens' actions into the best light. But their schooling and reading, and their or their parents' generation's personal involvement inevitably influenced their approach.

By the late 1960s, as American students were mostly attacking their universities and political system, their German counterparts were trying to find out what their elders were keeping from them, and what activities their fathers and grandfathers had been engaged in during the Third Reich. At that point, they wondered why so few Germans had spoken out against their countrymen's deeds. Among them were Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich, who in 1945 had denounced the Nazi doctors for having performed death-inducing experiments on Jewish children, homosexuals, and Germans with mental or physical impairments. But these doctors had closed ranks and pretended that they had done

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research only—to advance "scientific knowledge." They had ostracized their denouncers and, for the most part, had held on to leading positions and their good reputations in German medicine. Quite a few on the German left argued, along with Margarete Mitscherlich, that psychoanalysis alone could "heal the German psyche," which to some extent meant, also, that the sins of their fathers had to be admitted in order to be expunged. (By 1956, the Mitscherlichs, with the help of the Rockefeller Foundation, had set up Frankfurt's Sigmund-Freud-Institut—where they trained psychoanalysts and cooperated with sociologists and psychologists to explore the depth of the German unconscious.) Their questions eventually moved these issues to the center. By 1985, at the first congress of the International Psychoanalytic Association held in Germany, newly minted psychoanalysts accused not only their own parents but their "psychoanalyst fathers" as well of having deceived them: by obfuscating their Nazi past, their own training analyses, by necessity, had been fraudulent.

At that conference, the American psychoanalysts who had returned to their native Germany for the first time began to reminisce—on the positive memories of their early lives as well as on the atrocities of the death camps. Their theoretical reconstructions added to the literature on "how it really was," and to the memoirs that were beginning to pour out. And survivors of the camps held get-togethers of their own. Finally, the unspeakable was being exposed. This made for a deep divide between so-called objective and subjective history. In turn, a number of anti-Semites, such as David Irving in his libel suit against Deborah Lipstadt (and Penguin Books), were denying that the Holocaust had actually occurred, or that it had wiped out half of the world's Jews. The battle began to revolve around who would come to "own" the Holocaust.

•••

THE FRENCH HAD NOT been as innocent of anti-Semitism as they led the world to believe, but because in 1944 they had condemned the most reprehensible collaborators to death, years passed before scores of others would be held accountable. Still, whatever the collaboration with the German occupiers of Paris, or of the Vichy government, it was the Germans who invented gas chambers and performed the medical experiments. Yet, some French gladly did conspire with the occupiers, as Marcel Ophüls first showed in his film, *The Sorrow and the Pity* (1971), unmasking a number of accessories to these crimes. As we now know, some French policemen actually initiated round-ups of Jews for Drancy

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(from Paris) and for Gurs (from southern France)—for the trip to Auschwitz, and death.

Since the late 1980s, the hunt for Nazi collaborators in France has accelerated. Increasingly, books detailing specific events, deportations, and individuals' fates, along with more murky facts about French anti-Semitism have been written. Among these are, for instance, Margaret Collins Weitz's *Sisters in the Resistance: How Women Fought to Free France* (1995), Herbert Lottman's *The Left Bank: Writers, Artists, and Politics from the Popular Front to the Cold War* (1991), Richard Weisberg's *Vichy Law and the Holocaust in France* (1996), René Poznanski's *Être juif en France pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale* (1994), and Rita Kramer's *Flames in the Field* (1995). Of course, French intellectuals, beginning with Sartre's essay, "Anti-Semite and Jew" (1946)—which holds the anti-Semite responsible for the Holocaust—had addressed that controversial topic. But in their typically allusive, philosophical style, the French had infused and overlaid these discussions with moral lessons and abstruse references. (The recent focus on material gain resulting from investigations into the confiscation of Jewish property is an exception.)

Tzvetan Todorov, in *A French Tragedy* (1996), exemplifies the French genre of moral-*cum*-philosophy with the detailed reconstruction of one event, namely the killing of seventy Jewish adults and children near the town of Saint-Amand-Montrond in the center of France. He provides social and psychological biographies of each of the participants, including their family histories and circumstances, and turns the failed uprising by the local resistance into a fascinating thriller. We learn that the communists among the insurgents, who looked to Moscow for guidance, cared less about taking risks than about building up their power bases, that the much weaker Gaullists were second-guessing what leaders in London and Algiers might do, and that this mini civil war began just before June 6, 1944, after the various resistance groups had decided to unite in their fight against the German occupiers, and to liberate their town on D-Day. Without broad support, they fought the local militiamen and, after an easy win (some were family members), took somewhere between eight and twenty hostages. After the insurgents discovered that the Germans were still in charge, confusing negotiations ensued and, finally, led them to exchange the women among them, to kill the militiamen, and to murder the village Jews.

While reconstituting this forgotten history, in the tradition of the *Annales* school, Todorov describes the circuitous roads that had led the

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participants to converge in Saint-Amand. He asks whether Francis Bout de l'An, a former leftist and now a committed fascist and member of the French branch of the Waffen SS, and who was at the root of the massacre, was wrong in expecting the maquisards to free the hostages (including his own wife), whether individual beings are more than the ideology they serve, to what extent lofty political objectives disguise pride and vanity, and how group psychology may override military strategy. Mostly, he examines this episode as a moral paradigm, all along pondering the nature of sacrifice, responsibility, and suffering in times of civil war. Todorov only implies that once again innocent Jews became sacrificial lambs, but does state that "Lécussan [who instigated the massacre] is not an anomaly, a raging sadist. . .who would profit from circumstances to assuage his instincts. On the contrary, he is the logical product of a system." As Todorov puts each participant to the moral tests that point to their dilemmas and maps out the step-by-step decisions each of them faced, he tells us that acts taking place in the public sphere cannot be judged exclusively in terms of the intentions that motivated them, and that, ultimately, ethics of responsibility must override ethics of conviction.

But Lawrence Langer convincingly argues that polarities between morality and immorality "disintegrate in a place like Auschwitz." He points out that Todorov, by speaking interchangeably of Nazi Germany and Stalin's Russia, by universalizing the Holocaust, and by trying to schematize mass murder, turns the Holocaust into "little more than a drastic example of this modern conflict, and once we understand that, we will be in a better position to combat the totalitarian form of suppression of which the Holocaust was a not so singular example."

Moreover, by shifting the blame onto the Nazis' bureaucratic system, Todorov inadvertently aligns himself with the Germans who argued that they had to follow orders. However, as Langer reminds us, there was no special order, for instance, to the SS man who tore a baby in two in front of its mother, or to those who buried their victims alive after having shot them: these were ultra-sadistic acts by individuals. And as Christopher Browning in *Ordinary Men: Reserve Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (1991) showed, and as Daniel Goldhagen elaborated in *Hitler's Willing Executioners* (1996), many more Germans (and Poles and Slavs?) were involved in the killing of Jews than previously had been suspected—whether or not they claimed to have followed orders. Browning's study of Police Battalion 101 documented that a group of men who were not fanatic Nazis got into the habit of shooting Jews. Still, that Browning at the end of his book wonders whether *anyone* might have

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killed under the same circumstances, once again fudges distinctions between victims and perpetrators. Goldhagen, who postulated hatred as the driving force that allowed for setting up the "machinery of death," was severely criticized by, among others, Fritz Stern in "The Goldhagen Controversy" (*Einstein's World* [1999]), for simplifying the historical framework when, for instance, overlooking that anti-Semitism in the nineteenth century was endemic to the entire Western world, and that prejudice towards Jews has been wide-ranging—from classifying them as "vermin" to be exterminated to lessening their preeminence in realms such as journalism and banking.

...

GERMANS CONTINUE to deal with the consequences of the Nazi legacy on a daily basis. But can they truly examine the ethics of responsibility before they stop denying, or whitewashing, their culpability? It keeps coming up in debates about whether or not to raze a remaining killing or detention site or preserve it as a *lieu de memoires*; whether or not and where to erect a monument to the Jews exterminated during these years, and how prominent it ought to be. But can one blame the sons and grandsons for their fathers' deeds? Indeed, when the present generation of young Germans reads the works of Goethe, Schiller and Heine, and Austrian schoolchildren add the comedies by Nestroy, Raimund, and Grillparzer before tackling Günther Grass, Peter Handke, and Heinrich Böll, they are bound to inquire about what was written during the Third Reich. The myths about the Holocaust in the former Eastern Germany, that explained it all in terms of a capitalist conspiracy against communism (allegedly perpetrated by Jewish bankers), muddle these issues even more. Consequently, the shadow of the Nazi era hangs over and confuses every current political election and decision, cultural event, and celebration. And it invokes questions of whether or not terrorist acts by skinheads against foreign workers are portents of organized anti-Semitism and racism, or isolated incidents by extremists.

The same holds true for Austria, where in March 1938 Hitler was welcomed with open arms—even more so, since Austrians managed to deny their complicity for forty years. They first faced it when it became clear that Kurt Waldheim, the longtime Secretary General of the United Nations, had been an SS officer. While stationed in the Balkans during World War II, he had been responsible for the deaths of scores of Jews. But because (with the assistance of the victorious Allies) Austria had

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been declared the first of Hitler's victims, Austrians did not have to own up to their Nazi past. And, as Jörg Haider's recent electoral victory proves, nearly a third of the population still (at least in their heart of hearts) seems sympathetic to a neo-Nazi ideology in its disdain for all foreigners.

Austrians have begun to grapple only recently, and haphazardly, with the issues their German counterparts have been considering for a long time. *Überleben der Shoah und danach* (*Surviving the Shoah and After* [1999]) is one of a number of collections of essays on the subject, this one of talks delivered at a 1997 international conference of historians, psychiatrists, psychotherapists, and social psychologists. They focused on post-traumatic stress disorders and the resulting individual and social problems these have caused. As we know, in America, Germany, and elsewhere, for years groups of therapists of diverse orientations have had meetings with members of the social sciences, and have participated in long-term study groups. *In Contemporary Jewish Writing in Austria: An Anthology* (1999), Dagmar C. G. Lorenz collected short pieces, mostly by writers who were known beyond the Austrian borders but had not reached much of a public in their native land.

The recent turmoil caused by the Vienna Philharmonic's performance of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony at the former Nazi death camp in Mauthausen—where around 115,000 persons perished—exemplifies the conflict. Only now was it openly recalled that on the day of the Anschluss the orchestra immediately fired its Jewish members, that they performed Beethoven's *Fidelio* ten days later at the behest of Goering, and that 50 percent of the musicians eventually joined the Nazi party. "Anything that changes this unique slaughterhouse on Austrian soil into a concert house is tasteless to say the least. . .[And] the notion of Philharmonic musicians in striped pants sitting in the quarry where so many died is grotesque," said Marta Halpert, director of the Central European office of the Anti-Defamation League. Clemens Hellsberg, the Philharmonic's president, however, defended this concert as a sign of hope for a new millennium. And Sir Simon Rattle, the conductor, countered that "when the alternative is silence, there isn't really an alternative for a musician." According to *The New York Times*, and other reports, many important people stayed away, and the performance, which was broadcast around the country and attracted 11,000 listeners—who had been asked not to applaud—ended in an "eloquent silence." Whether or not in the future Mauthausen will be remembered for its atrocities or as a concert site remains to be seen.

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After more and more archives were made available in the early 1990s, more and more Nazi victims remembered: they opened old scars to let them ooze, started to dab at their forever festering wounds, and relived their trauma in public. Especially in response to such individuals as Faurisson and Bousquet, who were disavowing one or more of the components of the *univers concentrationnaire*, or the aims of the "final solution." Knowing they were the last survivors of the Nazi Holocaust, they wanted to leave a record of their torments for younger and coming generations. "Never again" became their motto. Whereas to begin with, émigrés born in Germany and Austria had born witness, later on, Claude Lanzman's *Shoah* (1980) inspired yet another spate of memoirs.

Many of these stories are the meat of Holocaust courses and studies. As such, these memories are important to historians, as are the testimonies in the Yale University video archives. But I wonder whether excerpts from these in book form, in for instance, *Witness: Voices from the Holocaust* (2000), (edited by Joshua M. Greene and Shiva Kumar), are as convincing of the enormity of the planned "scientific" deaths as are the visual ones. Despite Friedländer's thoughtful introduction, I doubt that students will grasp the scope of the crimes from relative snippets of experiences. They may well read these voices as those of just another category of long-dead victims—early Christians, crusaders, Armenians, Trojans come to "compete" for attention with the descendants of slaves, refugees from the wars in Korea and Vietnam, and political fugitives from around the world. In the current American Zeitgeist of multicultural relativizing, Hitler's prey are far outnumbered.

Martin Gilbert's *Holocaust Journey: Traveling in Search of the Past* (1997), which recounts visits to former death camps and abandoned Jewish monuments, former ghettos and other Jewish living quarters with a number of his students, seems to me a more successful way of introducing (relatively few) youngsters to the so-called lessons of the Holocaust. Gilbert weaves these into the history of places and their former famous inhabitants. Thereby, past periods of both harmony and strife come alive. Even the quiet of lawns where gas chambers once stood can be invoked to recall the desire by Germans to quickly forget the country's defeat in 1945—often referred to as the zero hour (*Stunde Null*)—and aimed to blame Hitler alone. Moreover, American students' hands-on encounters with German youngsters, it is assumed, will help them all to overcome the biases their elders are bound to have conveyed while they were growing up.

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BECAUSE WE KNOW LITTLE of life in the Soviet Union and its satellite states before the end of communism, we also know little about the lives of the Jews who in 1939, with the fall of Poland, fled East to escape the German army and the Gestapo. Following are just four of the diverse fates of those who spent their youth running from the Nazis, and lived to report about it.

Mira Ryczke Kimmelman, for example, narrates her unique story, expecting to "add at least yet another element, another integer, to the [Holocaust] picture." Mira, a middle-class child of Danzig, tells of a happy childhood—until the Germans overran Poland and the family was forced to leave for Warsaw. When ordered to escape for Tomaszow Mazowiecki, they lived with relatives, but conditions grew worse, after they had ever less jewelry to sell (for food), and had to wear the Star of David. By April 1942 they lived in the Tomaszov ghetto, which they managed to flee in the middle of the night—after the Gestapo had gone on a shooting spree of Jewish men. Soon, their deportation to rat-infested Blizyn-Majdanek followed—where they were among the few to survive hunger, a typhoid epidemic, and forced labor. From there, they were transported to Auschwitz. Miraculously, Mira eluded the gas chambers and found herself on the death march to Bergen-Belsen, via Gleiwitz and Mauthausen. Only after her liberation by the British army, on April 15, 1945, did she find out that just one day before Heinrich Himmler had decreed that for Germany "surrender is out of the question. . .no prisoner shall fall into the hands of the enemies alive." Her fears are palpable throughout.

Richard Bugajer was seventeen when made to join that death march. In his moving account, *Mein Schattenleben. Eine Jugend im Ghetto und KZ* (*My Shadow Life: A Youth in Ghetto and Concentration Camp* [2000]), he tells his son how he survived while attending a ghetto school, working as a saddler's and a tailor's apprentice, as a farmer and an electrician's helper. And much more. Famine was pervasive, and Bugajer used his hunger to learn as a means of survival. Reinhard Engel reconstructed this heart-rending story from the four drafts Bugajer had written with much pain before he died. He wanted his son to know that he had come of age during the Holocaust—in order to have him bear witness: "People too readily want to forget all that. . . .They don't want to be confronted by this shame. They're afraid of it, they fear that one is holding up a mirror, saying: 'That is what you did, what you are capable of, you, who are no more than a step in the evolution that clearly

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did not succeed." Engel points out that Bugajer was haunted by his ghetto life—having had to watch the arrival of German and Austrian Jews in the fall of 1941, the deportation to the gas chambers of 44,000 Jews and 5,000 Roma by April 1942. By 1944, he had seen another 40,000 persons around him die of hunger and illness, and others who were killed for listening to illegal radio programs, or sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau. By the time the Red Army arrived in January 1945, the ghetto of Lodz was left with about 870 persons. Bugajer's beloved father had died in his arms just before he was put on the death march.

Inevitably, what Bugajer calls his early "static" life always hung over his subsequently "dynamic" and successful one in Vienna like a threatening shadow. He says that its traces kept surfacing at odd times: when eating potatoes, looking at a specific theater performance, listening to music, and so on. Of course, this happens to most of those who have had even a much less intensive exposure to Nazi terror and Gestapo threats.

Hungary was overrun later, and the country's Jews knew some of what to expect. In 1943, Egon Balas (*Will to Freedom* [2000]) escaped by going underground for the Communist party instead of reporting to the Hungarian military service; thereby "postponing" his selection for deportation. His book is also an insider's history of the struggles between the fascists and the Communists. After many interrogations about his party membership in Hungary, he was imprisoned under Stalin in his native Romania, and finally managed to emigrate to the U.S. by the skin of his teeth. Like Kimmelman, Balas notes that these experiences, though unique to him, are typical for those who were caught between Hitler's and Stalin's terrorist regimes. Americans, who have always lived in a society based on law, have trouble grasping the reality of these constantly impending dangers, and marvel at the obstacles the lucky survivors had to surmount. But for the Bugajers, Balases, and Kimmelmans, the sheer fact that they successfully dealt with their perils cannot but contain a shade of (unconscious) triumphalism. They developed a degree of resilience, in addition to an ever-present (buried) sadness. Indeed, the reader is simultaneously outraged at these ordeals and engrossed in their whodunit elements. Knowing that the victim has lived to tell the story confers a sort of fictional quality to all such remembrances.

Lonek (Eliott Jaroslavicz), at the age of ten, after a grueling escape from Poland via Russia to Siberia with his desperate mother, was left by her at an orphanage in Tashkent. He was one of the nine hundred so-called Teheran children. When Lonek (now Eliott) came to see Dorit

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Whiteman, a clinical psychologist, he presented her with photographs and various papers to document this saga. She too wanted to find out what had happened to Jewish children who fled eastward in September 1939, and how some among them managed to survive. In *Escape Via Siberia* (1999), she tells how, from Tashkent, Lonek was miraculously rescued by a *Kindertransport* that was stranded in Iran, and then got to Palestine—by way of India and Egypt—and whose interim guardians had to dupe hostile populations and the authorities throughout the British mandate. Whiteman keeps evoking how Lonek felt: he cried a lot, was inconsolable, wondered whether he would ever again see his parents. Minute details of recovered memories and feelings alternate with descriptions of political and geographic facts, as well as with the specifics of the many life-threatening situations—which, as Lonek recalled, overwhelmed the thousands of children who were saved by the *Kindertransport*.

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AS THE WORD HOLOCAUST started to be applied to such slaughters as have taken place in Rwanda, Burundi, and Bosnia, and to local disasters, Hitler's persecution of the Jews—the systematic and automated mass killings in order to implement the "final solution"—increasingly has been referred to as the Shoah. However, Jürgen Habermas has interpreted the term Shoah to include "the deep layer of solidarity among all that wears a human face. . .[which] Auschwitz has changed." If we accept this definition, we again put the Nazi atrocities on a par with other genocides, as one horror among others, just another example of human excess.

But the survivors of Auschwitz and the other death camps insist that their experiences were unique, if only because they kept themselves alive by their conscious determination to bear witness. I would add that Habermas's formulation, although imbued with good will, liberal humanism, and philo-Semitism, constructs yet another idealized vision of mankind out of dystopia. So does the claim that the Shoah defines the twentieth century—with or without Jews, the state of Israel, or an updated Zionism. Michael Bernstein explained it well in the *Times Literary Supplement* (March 3, 2000):

> The Shoah cannot be distinctively revelatory about human nature as such, and about specifically post-Enlightenment European culture, without unintentionally making that culture the privileged

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> explanatory model for the entire world. It is the lasting injury to European self-esteem, as much as to its obliterated Jewish population, that is being mourned in abstruse formulations like Habermas's. . .and it is as a notably European, rather than as a Jewish, crisis of representation and understanding that the Shoah is so readily accorded its position at the heart of our culture's self-interrogation.

In fact, explanations for the Holocaust based on morals have taken as many forms as those premised on the bureaucratization of the Nazi system. And the further the Holocaust recedes into history, the fewer eye witnesses remain, and the more investigators must rely on interpretations by historians, philosophers, and other scholars.

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CONTEMPORARY FADDISH methods, theorizing, and interpretations have become the norm. Caroline Wiedmer, for instance, in *The Claims of Memory: Representations of the Holocaust in Contemporary Germany and France* (1999) had to "decide on which texts to discuss in a world suffused with representations of the past." And Hilene Flanzbaum, in her collection *The Americanization of the Holocaust* (1999), notes that we should not decry its Americanization, but must evaluate and interpret it responsibly. These two books are indicative of the fact that we have moved from analyses of eyewitness accounts to their representation, from trying to grasp a formerly unthinkable horror to its domestication by holding it up as a moral lesson. But by turning the Holocaust into an example of evil, we are also making it a part of our world. What had been unimaginable in the first third of the twentieth century had become only too possible in the third one. Such books are emblematic of academics filled with good intentions, postmodern zeal, and moral messages. Wiedmer, who was born in Switzerland after World War II, was "shocked" to learn of the major Swiss banks' complicity with the Third Reich, and of their subsequent concealment of Jewish funds and valuables. She chose to confront her country's tainted history by revising her own "subject-position" as she investigates "the evolution of a nation's memorial politics; and that a nation's memory index, or the 'degree of its memory tolerance,' is expressed in a ratio between forgetting and remembering central national events."

In Franzbaum's volume of collected essays, Amy Hungerford, for instance, finds that the equation between persons and representations is

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characteristic of a certain contemporary discourse of the Holocaust, and goes on to quote Berel Lang's point that "all literary representations of the Holocaust are violations of the facts of history" insofar as they do not let the facts speak for themselves. And because literary representation also denies historical facts, Hungerford says that she locates the discussion within "the larger cultural project." But this relativizing and theorizing, which accords with trendy, postmodern scholarship, confuses rather than clarifies what happened.

Lang, in *The Future of the Holocaust: Between History and Memory* (1999), explains how history and memory together shape views of the Holocaust, and assumes that another Holocaust is possible, because "the past will in some form reappear in the future whether we wish it to or not." Moreover, he maintains that questions about what induced, produced, and sustained the Nazi genocide bring forth new evidence about the event's impact: investigating its roots and consequences in Germany, and then in Austria, France, and Poland, its tentacles have come to stretch out to nearly all the "nations of the world." According to Lang, individual memories now take on a collective burden, because immediately after their liberation Holocaust survivors were too badly wounded to talk; and because the second and third generations, when casting it as part of their own past, do not recall a world before that genocide, it takes on a sharper edge for them. Other historians classify interpretations as "intentionalist" (they see a direct relationship between ideology, planning and policy) and as "functionalist"(they link decisions to specific contexts)—when made in Hitler's name by loyal followers.

Under the circumstances, such a widening of the debate is justified. But this is precisely why I am leery about "representations of the Holocaust." It happened. It remains a historical fact. It was an attempt to eliminate every single Jew—which might well have succeeded had the war gone on any longer or been won by the Third Reich instead of the Allies. Indeed, anti-Semitism, from mild to virulent forms, existed long before the Holocaust. As did greedy rulers and other individuals who managed to "legally" deprive Jews of their human rights and property. But never before had there been such systematically mechanized slaughter.

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THE DESCENDANTS of survivors, increasingly, have been fictionalizing their parents' and grandparents' generation's ordeals. And so do a

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number of imposters. But they do not do so in the allusive, insightful way of a Primo Levi, Aharon Applefeld, or Norman Manea, who were in the camps. Descendants' novels tend to be more explicit, and less ironic—dealing with "me" and the Holocaust, or "imagining" their families' suffering. Some of the second-hand experiences are most effective. The best among them, it seems to me, are Art Spiegelman's *Maus I* and *Maus II*. He neither sentimentalizes nor overdramatizes. Although I am somewhat suspicious of comic books, these truly serious ones, in their double-edged manner, convey the dilemmas of his parents, together with his own disbelief, defenses, and purposeful distancing that later generations get only from books and movies. The third generation tends to be too removed to have Spiegelman's insights.

Marion A. Kaplan's *Between Dignity and Despair: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany* (1998) is a valuable addition, because she begins by describing how from 1933 on, Jews who had been at home in Germany for many generations continued to be identified with German culture, and were living "normal" lives under mounting danger—though constantly kept off-guard. By interviewing hundreds of individuals and perusing published and unpublished records, Kaplan learned how they coped with the increasing tyranny that penetrated into their homes, how "through indoctrination, bribery, and coercion, the Nazi government turned anti-Semitic prejudice into a mass movement." She found that women managed better than their husbands—whom the Nazis persecuted more directly. Women saw to it that children attended school, even as their classmates became ever more anti-Semitic; they bought groceries, while ignoring the signs reading "Jews Unwelcome," and they prepared for emigration, while hoping that Hitler would soon be voted out of power. Kaplan details the incremental tightening of the noose which, after November 9, 1938—*Kristallnacht*—made brutality the order of the day.

None of that is new. But by focusing on the nitty-gritty of Jewish lives in the Third Reich—as it became more and more impossible to run a business, to cook, to shop, to maintain friendships with non-Jews—Kaplan conveys the essence of this reality along with the moral issues, without moralizing. And she demonstrates why the perennial question, "Why didn't you leave earlier?"—which I too have been asked repeatedly, and which is a central point in Peter Gay's *My German Question* (1998)—is incompatible with the step-by-step dehumanization and state-induced brutality that Germans (and Austrians) perpetrated on their former neighbors and friends. In *Briefe aus Wien: Jüdisches Leben vor der Deportation* (*Letters from Vienna: Jewish Life*

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before Deportation [1999]), my maternal grandmother inadvertently documented (much of it in code) how Jews were being disenfranchised; how being deprived of travel by tram or train, and marketing for just one hour at the end of the day, isolated them. She ended up having eleven persons in her four-room apartment; she had to try supporting her family by crocheting gloves for sixteen hours per day. Even my formerly wealthy paternal grandparents did not have enough money to buy food and medications at the end of 1941.

By then, Germany no longer allowed Jews to leave any more than America allowed them to land. Kaplan mentions that a few "ordinary Germans" did help Jews. She points out that the vast majority looked the other way when—early on—their children taunted Jewish children, when Jewish laborers at their places of work looked more and more emaciated and hungry and wore ever-shabbier clothes, and that they eagerly did take over Jewish enterprises and move into "Jewish" apartments after their owners were relocated to ghettos, or deported.

We need more of such serious research, instead of postmodern speculations, or Oscars for a glamorized Oscar Schindler, or the imagined life of a little boy in a sanitized concentration camp—who in real life would have been exterminated before ever entering it at all. This would mean that the Holocaust, also, would become a less fruitful subject for academic ruminations and media events. Only then might the brutality of it all become less taken for granted and, possibly, be recognized for the abominable aberration it was. Only then, I believe, could it fade into the distant past, analogous to the crusades, the Armenian massacre and the Trojan wars—not to be forgotten or denied, but to be disentangled from the currently fashionable tendency to relativize that evil.

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NORMAN MANEA

Berenger at Bard

In the fall of 1989, at Bard College, I started a course entitled "Eastern European Writers." I had selected mostly authors who, like me, were exiles: Milosz, Koestler, Kundera, Danilo Kiš, Ionesco. I was thus trying to liberate myself from the confusion of the oriental-communist degeneracy (whose imminent implosion I, in fact, did not foresee) and still remain connected to my distant homeland.

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The besieged man had finally escaped from the Colony of Rhino. He had finally got tired of shouting by himself, crouched in the cell of his room and deafened by the trampling of the street guards: "*I will resist, I will not surrender! It's my duty! I will stay that way to the end, no matter what, to the very end!*"

He had finally run from the black wind of disaster, he had not resisted. The big words had fled too, as guilty as he. The prisoner did not prove to be a "superior" man, as he had dreamt of being. He was just a poor lost man, too attached to petty survival.

The passage from the state of contraction in Rhinoromania of the ninth decade to the state of expansion on the great stage of the free Carnival had not been easy. The liberating shipwreck had also been a siege fraught with doubts and anguish.

In 1989, the transitional passage suddenly unfolded into bracing sunshine, under a clear and fresh sky.

July 9, 1989 was a glorious day in the wanderer's calendar. The small brown Honda, battered and tenacious, drove heroically through the gate of the American college—a paradisal enclave of trees and flowers and small houses in which teachers and students were practicing the traditional didactic Glass Bead game.

Editor's Note: This text first appeared in *Transilvanian Review* (Cluj, Romania) for the ninetieth anniversary of Ionesco's birth.

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I was given the gold key to my lodging that very same day. As in a fairy tale where the wizardly benefactor imposes a deadline, I was offered refuge for an entire year. Everything seemed to have come together under a lucky star. Time was eminently hospitable, as in my distant or more recent youth. That spectacular summer, with its sun that had turned solemn and imperial, heralded the beginning of a new era.

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EXILE IS ALSO an initiation into simulacrum, an exercise in inventive theatricality. This is what interior exile is about, the solitary man's alienation within the ubiquitous totalitarian masquerade. But what of exile proper? On the new stage, the newcomer had been cast in a role he had never played before. Professor! . . .in a foreign world and a foreign language, in front of a foreign audience.

The idyllic academic enclave could not dispel the exile's doubts; it only rebuked them, every day, through the majestic peaceful woods and the perfect sky. With every dusk, the hospitable summer months were bringing the *Debut* closer, the meeting with the public, scheduled for that fall.

He had many doubts. He wondered how he could avoid the old role that had made him famous. "The Lost One?". . .Not yet at home with life? With its confused forces? Lost, any way, anywhere, any time?

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WHEN I OPENED THE DOOR to the lecture room, I was amazed by the casual, typically American look of my young audience. Quite a few of them were barefoot. . . .The relaxing effect of the superb September afternoon or the pleasure of annoying the Martian who had been trained on his bizarre native planet according to strict rules.

The dialogue with the class became natural quite soon. Despite a certain cultural deficit, most students were bright and open to anything new. They had been educated in and for freedom; they were accustomed to the critical spirit and defied preconceived ideas, even the most honored. Gradually, my new position was moderating its own routine.

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TOWARD THE END of the semester, around November, when in Eastern Europe the Berlin Wall and the walls within ourselves were being broken

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to pieces from one day to another, something also out of the ordinary happened in my class.

Among the mid-term papers, I had received one on Eugene Ionesco's *Rhinoceros*. Hesitating to evaluate it, I decided to read it to the class, without disclosing the author's name, then to ask them to comment on it and suggest a grade.

There was nothing spectacular in the beginning:

> Berenger cannot believe his eyes when his close friend, Jean, joins the epidemic sweeping their village and transforms himself into a rhinoceros. As the horn swells on his forehead and guttural moaning bulges from his thickening throat, the frantic Jean sings the blessing of freedom to a bewildered Berenger. "Morals! I'm sick of morals! We must go beyond moral standards. Nature has its own laws. Morals is against nature!" From a responsible obedient citizen who ostracized Berenger for his senseless rebellion, Jean has become a raving reactionary. He gradually turns green as he denounces the societal structure he so vehemently protected as a human. Along with the release of his human form, Jean is released from the laws and the rules he had been conditioned (forced) to uphold. Berenger is terrorized. Before him stands the man who had always symbolized order—a man he had felt too weak to imitate. Berenger cannot get beyond the absurdity of this revolution against the human condition. He is terrified to admit that the RHINOCEROS could be making a valid, self-satisfying decision of rejection.

However natural and acceptable it seemed, the last sentence was somehow already announcing the novelty.

The class sensed the potential turn; the silence was complete. I read the last sentences again, before going on. "Berenger cannot get beyond the absurdity of this revolution against the human condition. He is terrified to admit that the RHINOCEROS could be making a valid, self-satisfying decision of rejection."

Attention grew keener, I felt that.

> He is terrified to admit that the RHINOCEROS could be making a valid, self-satisfying decision of rejection. . . .Could Jean, a model citizen—a pillar of social strength for Berenger himself—be choosing to betray the established code he so religiously upheld? To Berenger's horror, the choice is imminent. He grasps at analytical solutions to a sociological crisis. He is responsible for making up his own mind, he will procure his destiny and suffer the repercussions: to become a Rhinoceros or to remain a human being. Suddenly, life before the commotion seems safe and logical to Berenger, as he watches Jean go stampeding through a brick wall. The fact that he had, for all intents and purposes,

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rejected society through his alcoholism is buried under the weight of his fear. He clings dearly to that same societal structure, as if to a rope over an abyss. Though he openly admits his condemnation of his social stratosphere, Berenger isn't strong enough to allow his own release. He holds on to the life he hated to avoid, the wave that would wash him into the life he does not understand.

Curiosity and tension were rising in the class. The true surprise was not so much the reversal of an accepted interpretation as the rigor, the paradoxically reversed common sense and the logic of the demonstration.

Berenger maintains that his friend Jean "must have made a mistake" because he (Berenger) is unable to find a more valid reason to choose, and because he cannot comprehend his old friend's desire for a "new life." Whether or not the "mindless" life of the Rhinoceros is a more satisfying one or a (better) more stimulating one is irrelevant. Berenger choosing not to sacrifice his identity is unfounded because he makes it on the basis of fear. As he finds himself the last remaining human being, he retains his obstinate skepticism. "I'm the last man left, I'm staying that way to the end. I'm not capitulating." Berenger's refusal to "capitulate" is hardly an honorary one. Fear of change constrains our progression. To choose a life of bondage to certain misery—a life of constriction (as Berenger's was: "I just can't get used to life," is a coward's choice. Berenger cannot be credited with "maintaining his integrity or identity." He maintains nothing but the pathetic life he so detests that for him is safe, and turns his back on an opportunity for revival.

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THE PROFESSOR HAD HURRIED over the last few sentences in embarrassment. He already knew the text and was terrified that he would sink into his thoughts again, as when he first read it. "*I can't get used to life.*" All too often he had whimpered such words back home as well as here, in the New World, and in the new life which he did not feel prepared for.

Preserving his identity? Out of fear? Really?

Yes, he hurried over the last sentences as if he hoped to shut out the dilemma, the thought that had been left behind, in the words that he had dragged after him from the other end of the world and that continued to crawl after him, with him, in him, endlessly.

How "European" the traditional interpretation of the play seemed all at once!

The reader had admitted his duplicity, his postponed aspirations, gradually perverted by the sinuous twists of prudence, but he knew how

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much the American sentences expressed the American mythology of renewal. The natural and the sudden surprises, the regeneration of the daily travesty, the complete changing of one's appearance, personality, preferences, the need to "get ahead," at any cost. Avoiding lament, accepting challenges, no matter how unfavorable, but not defeat. Assuming destiny individually, yes, one could say so, as his new fellow American countrymen were saying.

Throughout this crisis Berenger is concerned, not with the human condition, but with his own. The people of his village transforming into Rhinoceroses affects Berenger's own life.

Yes, it was true, I knew how it was when Rhinoceroses multiply around the solitary man.

He maintains that, had it happened elsewhere ("if only it had happened somewhere else"), it could have been discussed logically and rationally. There was even the potential for it to become instructive and educational in its sensibilities.

Indeed, had it happened elsewhere. . .it would have been a logical, instructive discussion, but encircled, under siege, one barely has the strength to breathe.

However, because it involves Berenger on such an immediate level, he is unable to deal with the situation on any basis of integrity. His fear of the disruption of his own existence blocks out his ability to be rational.

Yes, it blocks it, perhaps. It would have been reasonable to give up everything, to run finally, to free himself from everything and from himself, to start all over again in a new world and in a new life. Integrity. . . integrity had existed, though! The isolation, the contraction in the narrow cell of the room preserved integrity—at least partly. One must not forget that! No, one cannot forget the sacrifices and risks of solitude, that's what the professor was thinking.

His fear of the disruption of his own existence blocks out his ability to be rational. . .the concept of structural unity and of independent responsibility for choice, that lays the foundation for democracy, would be obsolete. . .again we are shown Berenger's character to be one lacking the strength to sustain his own moral freedom. He is certainly no advocate who would sustain the freedom of society.

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But he is, poor thing! He is, he certainly was, and he has remained a dreamer, a champion of freedom. That's what he is, that poor bastard.

A eulogy for "the revolutionary" symbol, embodied by the cruel "renewing" disease of rhinoceritis? An indictment of the anti-hero Berenger? My student was overturning the premise that was so dear to the author, his admirers, and the reader, lost in that tumble and that American lecture room.

Although with difficulty, the professor was giving up—he had to admit it—this hero of non-abdication, non-giving-up, to the humanity of his ambiguities; he had discovered the vulnerability of the lost ones long ago and far away, not only in Ionesco's tragicomedy but also in the comedy—not lacking in tragic aspects—of everyday life in socialist Rhinoromania.

Do ambiguities and vulnerability hinder us and put an end to our "progress?"

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NO, THE PROFESSOR did not voice his doubts. He continued to listen to the alien sentences that emerged from the clear handwriting, the black ink, the lined notebook, and evasively phrased in the adventurous phonetics of his new role.

Berenger shouts for his neighbors-turned-rhinoceros to maintain the laws established by humans. ("Stop it! . . .Noise is forbidden in these flats! Noise is forbidden!") Berenger did not maintain these laws himself; he drank consistently, missed work, appeared socially delinquent, and yet, in this time of upheaval, Berenger grasps on to the "social code" for dear life. Lacking the ability to live up to the original social status, he is certainly not ready to adopt a new set of standards however revolutionary or progressive it may be. For this weaker members (such as Berenger) will hold a society back in a time of revolutionary change.

"New set of standards," "revolutionary change," "progressive". . .the terms certainly had a different meaning for the young audience than the one perverted for so long in the Colony of Rhino that the improvised Eastern European professor kept thinking of.

He was smiling questioningly and aloofly and confusedly, looking down at the lined sheet of paper, preparing himself to pronounce the new-old words: "radicals," "conservatives," "conventionalism," "duty". . .—barbarisms twisted and turned in the DADA Barracks, with hammer and sickle, until they could no longer be pronounced, except in the Rhinoceros Circus.

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After being an outcast himself from a society with strict standards, those same conservatives take Berenger's place as radicals and he, in turn, clings to their conventionalism. With the breakdown of society, Berenger's former social stance is disqualified. Berenger seems to have adopted the ultraconservative views expressed earlier by Jean. ("A superior man is the one who does his duty.") Suddenly, he is obsessed with man's obligation to society—a notion he previously acted against.

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THE ICONOCLASTIC COMMENTARY on the iconoclastic literary work ended with a verdict to match.

The utter absurdity of Ionesco's plot that a town full of respectable citizens turns, one by one, into a herd of stampeding Rhinoceroses, lends itself well to the simplicity of its message. Ionesco uses the character of Berenger to illustrate man's tragic incapacity to accept change and the growth and improvement that inevitably accompany it.

The professor stopped. He seemed amazed by the words "growth and improvement," as he heard them for the first time. In fact, he heard a series of muted words in another language. "The Legion wipes its ass with this country," a friend of Ionesco's whispered in 1941, in Bucharest. "Romania is not worthy of the Legion," another of Ionesco's friends stated at the same time. Berenger was then called Eugen Ionescu, a terrified witness of the rhinocerization of too many of his friends. To him, the fascist legionaries in their rhino-green shirts were "enchained beasts," embodying "the bestiality and endless stupidity of mankind and cosmos," while their songs were "an iron roar, with iron and gall, spitting gall and iron."

He nevertheless regained the blank tone that the text preserved for the conclusion:

Berenger, seemingly the most dissatisfied, is the first (and the last) to refute the new ideology. By fear, human beings are held back from progression.

Fear? Yes, certainly there had been fear too. But not only that. Not just fear, he could swear, swear—not just fear!

He was ready to swear in front of the youthful audience in the New World that disgust and lucidity and integrity too, yes, yes, integrity too, yes, yes, ambiguities and vulnerability too had kept the poor outlaw far from the "progress" of the new man, the new life, and the new ideology.

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THE READING HAD STOPPED. The political actualization of the famous play had been realized in the very last sentences of the text:

For twenty years a wall stood blocking change in East Germany. Not until this year was the last "Berenger" overrun by the Rhinoceroses, and the wall removed, opening up space for growth.

Perplexity should finally have burst out. Did the Rhinos remove the wall? Didn't they actually build it? . . .What kind of "growth" did they want? asked the cricket buzzing imperceptibly in the Eastern European's thoughts and in the American sentences read to the American youngsters.

No one seemed in a hurry to comment. I remembered the school of long ago, in the country of long ago and far away. "Get back to your seat, moron," the Teacher Rhino would roar at the silent class. The iron roar and the iron and gall words had made me shrink in my desk, ashamed at the shame of the classmate standing at the blackboard, and terrified that the same thing would somehow happen to me all too soon.

• • •

ONE OF THE RIGHTS the exiled had discovered in America was exactly this: the right to. . ."stupidity." Stupidity, ignorance, candor, and innocence—cultural, political, social, and other. The nerve with which aberrant beliefs, feelings, and experiences are being proclaimed! And the sacrosanct justification: "This is my opinion!" The void full of "self-esteem," in which landmarks, comparisons, and inhibitions are annulled; any admonition becomes "paternalistic," and therefore unacceptable. Certainly the show is not necessarily funny. And yet, the uninhibited display of qualities and defects is quite rich in revelations (even that "stupidity" is not always so foolish as it seems).

The inexhaustible energy of self-achievement is the hallmark of American democracy. A people's democracy (how could it be otherwise?), therefore also "vulgar" and "stupid," but impetuous in its renewing vitality.

The exile had not forgotten the words of a poet who returned to socialist Romania after spending a year in America and who, when asked what seemed to him unique, unrivaled, one single thing, just one, finally answered, overwhelmed: "The status of the ugly woman. It is the only

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place in the world where this does not seem to be a handicap, where it does not become a reason for being excluded or frustrated. . . ."

Such digressions went through the exile's mind as he waited for a student to comment on the paper he had just read to the class.

• • •

THEY WERE SO QUIET, the vast silence was difficult to break. I insisted, however, that I wanted to hear their opinions. I finally received several brief and cutting criticisms of the troublesome thesis.

I then passed out small slips of paper, asking the students to give the paper a grade and explain their reasoning. They did not have to sign the slips, their opinions would remain anonymous.

At the end of class, as the students were heading out the door, the author approached me with a pale face. I had guiltily watched how she stood the trial, stoic but also hurt. I apologized for not having asked her permission to read her paper in public and not warning her of the referendum.

She did not seem bothered about such formalities. Her discontent was about something else. "How can they say I'm a fascist? You may not know, but I'm Jewish!"

No, I did not know and it did not seem very important to me. This is not what it is all about, I said, this is not about ethnicity or even about "fascism."

She had indeed ignored the antifascist or anti-Communist meaning of the play, as well as the numerous historical, not just ideological, connotations. The real question remained, however, whether the reasoning was sound. That is what I tried to explain to the slight and silent young woman in front of me. I was hesitant to tell her that in fascist legionary Rhinoromania, as well as in the socialist one, her point of view had been validated by the signature of certain famous thinkers and artists.

• • •

BACK HOME, I STARTED looking at the students' slips of paper. Despite the harsh criticism expressed in class, the grades given to the paper were good, even very good: B+, A, A-, B.

The comments were also worth paying attention to.

Well-written, provocative, well-defended, and plausible—if it weren't for the mindless uniformity of the rhinoceroses. This poses the problem of "good"

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totalitarianism. I can't present a contradiction to the views here, even though I can't agree with them, and in total I give an A for entertaining and disturbing provocativeness.

Well written, but sounds like it was written by a Rhinoceros. A convincing argument but something tells me she missed the point.

This slip of paper indicated that the author of the paper had been identified ("she") and added a hesitant B/B-.

A/B+ was not accompanied by a commentary. One slip of paper did not have a grade but, in beautiful handwriting, asked:

Transgression or transcendence? The student could either be a Stalinist or a fascist, but not a revolutionary. Yes, there are reasons to make noise in a stifling society, but the "transgressions" are neither progressions, or revolutions. Fascist character is partly rebellious, of course; the question is that the (justified, I suppose) rebellious impulses are manipulated by reactionary social groups. Change for the sake of change is not praiseworthy.

Another A/B+ was justified as follows:

Fear is not the only reason for which he doesn't become a Rhino. But a good point.

Finally, an A included a brief note that seemed addressed to the Eastern European professor:

Although I had a different interpretation I find this one to be very interesting, subversive, and not unfounded.

Obviously, the class had not been apathetic at all. Nor was it lacking in suppleness of perception.

The Eastern European also had something to learn, as it were, from his students' spirit of fair play.

•••

I KEPT IN TOUCH with Nancy after she was no longer my student and even later when, having received a master's degree in fine arts from Bard, she went to Japan, where she taught English for a while.

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I also kept in touch with her paper. In 1996, I had the opportunity to subject her thesis to a re-evaluation.

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MANY THINGS HAVE CHANGED with regard to Ionesco over the years. An open adversary of Romanian nationalism, he was condemned immediately after the war, before Communists took complete power, for "insults" against the State and the Nation. He had indeed expressed his disgust for the Army, the Church, the Law, demagogy, immorality, the tyranny of parvenu, and yet again, the "angel-like figures of Romanian nationalism." But also for the "refined" intellectuals, fascinated with the base nature of the Beast.

He did everything to escape his rhinocerized homeland: "*Anything could have happened. I could have died; I could have been convicted; I could have become a dog too; I could have been possessed by the Legionaries' devil. When I left the country, I had the feeling I had saved myself from fire, earthquake, ocean waves, whirlpools. . . .It seems to me I had not seen people for a long time. I was awakening from a nightmare; I was escaping from hell. . . .Everything is fine when the nationalistic homeland is far away.*"

His work, which was banned during Stalinism, was briefly recovered during the interval of "liberalization" in the mid 1960s, due to his "humanism" and "antifascism." Later on, it was exiled again because of its antitotalitarian subversiveness and the author's intransigence toward the Carpathian Clown's dictatorship. Published again in their entirety after 1989, his writings have remained a source of perplexity and suspicion not just for any "national" institution but also for the consumer of pop-cultural products.

Ionesco's death, in 1994, sanctioned not his return to his native country but his separation from a whole world that was no longer his.

To the very end he had been a fierce enemy of death in all its forms. He kept dreaming of avoiding the unavoidable. "*The truth is to be found in the imaginary,*" he repeated. While constantly reasserting his religiosity, he never failed to add that "*I could never believe enough. . . .I am like the one who prays daily: Lord, make me believe. . . .The truth is in the imaginary.*" In the end, he resigned himself, as revealed by his will, which *Le Figaro* published the very day he died: "*Perhaps there will be joy afterwards. . . .*"

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IN THE YEARS following the collapse of the Wall between the two Europes and the two worlds, *Rhinoceros* had garnered not only the well-known antitotalitarian meaning but also a "democratic" and "American" connotation—in the light of the new wars between sexes and minorities of all kinds, each group militating for a distinguished and privileged identity.

Class and race struggles had been replaced by other conflicts and slogans. . . .This was no longer about absolute, totalitarian oppression, it was about militant simplifications, not reflecting greater tolerance for insecurity, vulnerability, imprecision, ambiguity, and skepticism. The horn of rhinoceritis can be recognized today not just in the party membership card or badge, in the fundamentalists' cross, star or crescent, but also in the extreme ideologization of difference.

• • •

SEVEN YEARS HAD PASSED, as in the stories of prophecy. The lost one, the wanderer, was still at Bard. The green and the red Rhinos had gradually moved on, and his homeland, still not immune to old and new types of rhinoceritis, had receded farther and farther into the distance. Yes, the exile was in the same place, but less exiled than before. Moving away from his former biography proved beneficial more than once; the exile Eugene Ionesco had been right.

In 1996, the class at Bard no longer resembled that of seven years earlier. Soon after the fall of communism in Eastern Europe, the college had initiated a program of academic exchanges, and every year a number of East European students had come to Bard to study for two semesters.

During the 1996–97 academic year, I was teaching a course entitled "Danube—A Literary Journey." This time Ionesco was accompanying his fellow writers Musil and Kafka, Koestler and Krleza, Kiš and Canetti. The literary journey along the Danube dealt with "Central European" authors; in their books, we were trying to discover the spirit of "Mitteleuropa" in relation to the ever-changing reality of here and there.

The class was almost equally divided between American and Eastern European students. From the very beginning, the seminar discussions benefited from the stimulating tension between the "subtlety" characteristic of the Old World and the open, realistic, efficient "practicality" of America.

Ionesco's metaphor seemed shocking to the Americans and already partly "outdated" to the Europeans. The voluble student from Tbilisi

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argued that Beckett's plays seem more radical to him than Ionesco's because the Irish author accepted no compromise with the so-called humanism of hope, while the female Czech student saw in the Logician's rhinocerization a necessary "liberation" from the monomaniacal idiocy of ignoring reality.

I promptly recalled the image of Ionesco as he appeared in 1979, when I first met him. It was the same image evoked more than half a century before by Mihail Sebastian, his friend and a friend of his friends, whose rhinocerizing delirium these two contemplated together in Bucharest in the 1930s and 1940s. "*I can't get used to life. . .*" the person who found it even harder to get used to death seemed to say in 1979, just as in 1941. Then, listening in Cismigiu Park in Bucharest to a broadcast of a speech by the Great Rhinoceros from Berlin, Berenger had turned pale, then white, and fled in terror. "I can't! I can't," he was whispering "with a sort of physical despair," terrified by the besieging barbarism around him.

I gave up my initial idea of discussing the significance of the rhinoceros in the imagery of antiquity with my class, Alexander's apocryphal letter to Aristotle (quoted in Flusser's memorable book *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity* [1988]), in which the unusual animal, larger than an elephant and with three horns, is evoked by the name the Indians gave it: "odontotyrannos." The fabulous apparition is also mentioned in the writings of the neo-Pythagorean Philostratus and, even before him, in the Jewish apocalyptic literature and in the Book of Daniel 7.7, where the monstrous "odontotyrannos," seen with the same eschatological horror and fear, embodies—through its "steel teeth and bronze claws"—the all-destructive force the modern tyrants would regenerate with renewed vitality. I was not at all sure that such pedantic clarifications would not bore my audience.

But the provocative, unconventional pages of the student of seven years earlier could be useful again, I believed. I therefore tried the "Nancy test" on the new class too. The grades she had received in 1989 from her fellow students were not very different from those given by their successors in 1996.

Nor were the commentaries too different from the previous ones:

Her arguments seem to be well-supported, her indulgence can be justified. The paradox she depicts coming from the hero's fear of change which then also necessarily means a reabandonment from the society the same way as in the non-rhinoceros one, is very well posited.

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Is the disregard for its historical context a conscious decision? The analysis of the main character (his inconsequence, therefore weakness) seems even more satisfying than the traditional "humanistic" approach (what saves him is "humanity" i.e., weakness, thoughtlessness?) Surely this interpretation is far more optimistic, however, leaving out the bitterness and tragedy (for, after all, there is no victor). A brave, provoking attempt.

The paper is one-sided. In fact, becoming rhinoceros is not, according to the internal logic of the text, an improvement. But the originality and brilliancy of the paper is beyond any question.

Some valid points on the subject of Berenger's about-face and his hypocrisy in defending the "civilization" he cannot believe in, but she gravely misreads "rhinoceritis" by interpreting it as "progress" of a liberating nature; also, she ignores the way language in the play functions as a rationalizing suprastructure, and accepts the characters' statements at face value.

Awful. However, her assertion that the actions of a society rely completely upon the balance Rhinoceroses/Berengers at any given time for any given cause/extreme was clear.

This paper is a somewhat irresponsible piece of proto-fascist propaganda. It fails to provide a means of entering the text by neglecting: 1. the distinction between collective (in a non-coercive way) political/historical change and violent conformist suppressions of otherness, and 2. the actual psychological impact of the concrete historical situation that Ionesco is allegorizing.

We could have even discussed some of the theses of the students of 1996. A Polish female student focused on "the rhinocerization of language" in Ionesco's play ("The Intransparency of Language in *Rhinoceros*"), analyzing language as a "dramatic object," revealing its own absurdity and gradual loss of meaning, its capacity to convey ideas and sentiments, in the absence of an appropriate idiom. A crisis of human relationships, which are finally automated by clichés and redundancy.

What the thesis of seven years earlier brought, however, was the shock of turning the interpretation "inside out." Was this turn in Ionesco's spirit? "The right to stupidity?" How "stupid" was yesterday's stupidity? And today's? I would have liked to have taken up the question with the father of the absurd drama. The fundamental right to candor, doubt, challenge, failure? Forms of freedom, that is, of individuality? I suppose Ionesco would have had a lot to say.

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I HAD SEEN HIM in passing during a visit to Paris at the beginning of the 1980s, on an evening that I would spend with Marie-France, his graceful and devoted daughter. He came into the hall for a few moments, lonely and vulnerable, just to meet me. We only exchanged a few unimportant words. An affectionate absence on the sad Charlot's face, a sort of not necessarily alcoholic dizziness.

"Already drunk, after several cocktails (on a Saturday morning), he starts talking to me about his mother," Sebastian wrote in 1941. Over forty years had passed, it was a Saturday evening, not morning, but the tormented inner self seemed to ask for relief this time too, "as if a burden would lie heavy on him, as if he would smother." The burden, perhaps a secret rusted by time but still bleeding, was that "precious leper" who was born of a Jewish mother.

His face seemed to bear the trace of that absolute grief of understanding human reality. His "confidence" in man's ability to save himself, despite the horrors he himself produces, clearly had been the result, not of naïveté or optimism, as the student from Tbilisi believed, but of the ultimate need to "force" the gods' grace.

When we went into the street, Marie-France told me about Ionesco's meeting with an important Romanian fiction writer. After skeptically inspecting the roomy apartment, located in the heart of Paris, at Boulevard Montparnasse 96A, the visitor from Bucharest expressed his disappointment that a writer of such standing and a member of the French Academy had not been given a villa with a garden and adequate atmosphere, as socialist Rhinoromania's "classics" were. The member of the French Academy did not seem offended. He called Marie-France and asked her to show the guest her small room too, so that he could see that the apartment had one more room. . . .

I was not quite listening to this meaningful anecdote. The noble sadness of his face, which I had seen in one of destiny's moments, was haunting me. *I can't get used to life.* I was hearing around me and inside me Berenger's voice reading the author's unforgettable face.

I would be troubled every time Ionesco's name made me recall his face.

Translated from the Romanian by Liviu Bleoca

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RONALD RADOSH

The Legacy of the Anti-Communist Liberal Intellectuals

NOTHING SEEMS TO TROUBLE a new generation of historians, who came of age in the 1960s, more than the attitude and intellectual positions taken by a small group of liberal intellectuals during the 1950s. This group, forever to be called "the New York intellectuals" since the late Irving Howe named them, have come to be portrayed as a group who squandered their once proud liberal heritage, and who inadvertently gave their support and their backing to the national hysteria that gripped America during the McCarthy years.

Writing two decades ago, the historian Mary S. McAuliffe argued that in rejecting what she mistakenly calls the "American left," when she clearly meant the pro-Communist left, liberals had accepted "the basic assumptions and tactics of the Red Scare itself." McAuliffe argued that the liberal intellectuals excluded Communists "from the arena of permissible public debate and, as a result, lost sight of vital civil liberties." Writing more recently, the historian Ellen Shrecker has provided the basic contemporary indictment: the New York intellectuals, she writes, "functioned as a kind of intelligence service for the [right-wing anti-Communist] network." Although they thought of themselves as different from McCarthyites, they were doing their work for them. They developed both the term "Stalinist" and the concept "totalitarian," both of which, according to Shrecker, muddied the waters by failing to make "distinctions between Stalin's crimes and Hitler's and stressing the similarities rather than the differences between Communism and fascism." In allying themselves with the Right to oppose Communists, and in refusing to continue the wartime Popular Front, these New York intellectuals made "their own. . .contribution to the postwar wave of political repression." Indeed, she claims, "the New York intellectuals' depiction of Communism differed little in its main outlines from that of Joe McCarthy."

Professor Shrecker's judgment is a harsh one, and it is not unique to her alone. The position she espouses is anti-anti-Communism, and it is a stance that has become all too common. Indeed, the argument gained

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attention when Lillian Hellman made it in her now famous retrospective look back at the McCarthy years. Reflecting on the views of her old friends Lionel and Diana Trilling, Hellman wrote that the "good magazines" they wrote for, particularly the literary-political journal *Partisan Review*, failed to stand up substantially to the threat posed by the McCarthyites to America's intellectual and cultural life. Its editors protested endlessly against the persecution of dissidents in Eastern Europe, she wrote, but "never took an editorial position against McCarthy himself"; nor, she added, did *Commentary*, although she claimed that Irving Kristol did use its pages to attack McCarthy's critics. The idea that this intellectual community succumbed to McCarthyism has spread far and wide. The British journalist Godfrey Hodgson, in his widely discussed and influential overview, *America In Our Time*, thus refers to the "trajectory, in hardly more than a decade, of *Partisan Review*. . .from dutiful Stalinism through Trotskyite heresy to the bleakest Cold War anti-Communist orthodoxy."

It has become accepted wisdom, evidently, to believe that without the respectability given to anti-Communism by the treason of the New York intellectuals, who abandoned their commitment to intellectual responsibility out of a desire to be accepted as part of the great American celebration, that McCarthy and his orgy of demagoguery would never have been possible. So many decades after the events, the time has finally come to reassess and reevaluate what it was exactly that this small but influential group was saying, and to examine more closely what its response actually was to the emergence of Senator Joseph McCarthy and his postwar crusade.

As a group of intellectuals, the different members were concerned with nuance. Having been aware since the 1930s of the reality of Stalinism, and having developed over the years many legitimate reasons for opposition to American Communism, the intellectuals looked askance at the way in which their concerns were now being bowdlerized and parodied by the likes of Joe McCarthy and his cohorts. Nevertheless, they were concerned with how to deal with very real issues relating to national security, while avoiding indiscriminate witch-hunts against real dissenters and radicals. Most importantly, they never wavered in their understanding that international Communism, and its American affiliate, were serious dangers to the American polity.

Indeed, the issues they debated and the positions they espoused continue to reverberate, as was made clear most recently in the brouhaha over the lifetime recognition award given to director Elia Kazan by the Motion Picture Academy in 1999. To many of the Hollywood left wing,

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Kazan had committed the unforgivable sin of naming names before the House Committee on Un-American Activities, and therefore should not have been nominated to receive a major award. To others, Kazan's political judgments were seen as not so wide of the mark, and they argued that he should be judged only on the merits of his work in cinema.

We can begin our examination by looking first at the incisive arguments made by Diana Trilling, who had been literary editor of the left-wing magazine *The Nation*, and the wife of Lionel Trilling, perhaps the most esteemed and erudite member of the community. Mrs. Trilling was, as her published diary established, horrified at the crudeness and nastiness of McCarthy's interrogations. Indeed, Mrs. Trilling made it clear at the start of her diary entry that she was opposed "*both* to McCarthy and the Communists." Indeed, she confided that she was "alarmed by McCarthyism." Yet, she understood what other liberals failed to comprehend—that "our intense fear of McCarthyism has been nurtured by the Communists and directly serves the Communist purpose." Yet, as she sat by her radio, she would wait in expectation for McCarthy to yell out her name "over the air in that awful accent of righteous condemnation." Nevertheless, she was clear about the main point: "the *soi-disant* liberals made McCarthyism possible." What she and her friends were pointing out was that had the New Deal and Fair Deal liberals faced the nature of Communism head on, there would have been no vacuum for a Joe McCarthy to enter.

Indeed, Mrs. Trilling insisted that good liberals had two enemies—McCarthy and the Communists—and she rejected even a temporary alliance with either of them. In intellectual circles, it was easy to attack and to condemn McCarthy. But what upset her was that so many of her liberal friends failed to comprehend the "true nature of the Communist danger." To seek to root out Communists from arenas of influence, in Mrs. Trilling's eyes, was hardly McCarthyite, because it was necessary and correct. Thus, no public figure irritated her more than Lord Bertrand Russell, who years earlier, had been among the first intellectuals to accurately characterize the nature of Soviet Communism.

Mrs. Trilling felt that in the 1950s, Russell had begun to lose the clarity of his early thinking. Russell and other European intellectuals, she noted, were spreading the false idea that the United States was near the condition of Fascist Germany in the 1940s. "The idea that America is a terror-stricken country in the grip of hysteria is a Communist-inspired idea," she wrote, and that so influential a figure as Lord Russell could spread such nonsense was most unsettling. Therefore, unlike Russell, she saw it as a "reasonable function of the legislative body" to investigate

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"the possibility of subversive influences on Government policy." That meant rallying around the "issue of civil liberties," and denying Congress the right to investigate potential subversion, was in fact giving comfort to Joe McCarthy—who would then be free to abuse power by moving where others feared to tread. Imagine, she asked, if those brought before the House Committee on Un-American Activities were pro-Nazi, rather than pro-Communist. Mrs. Trilling pointed out sharply that those liberals who were now so agitated when hearings took place would be the last to object if the subjects of the hearings were on the political far right. Trilling asked rhetorically: "Would the liberal chorus swell so loud, or swell at all in defense of *these* victims of repression?"

As a tough-minded liberal anti-Communist, Diana Trilling reflected sharply on the meaning of the indictment and conviction of Alger Hiss. While to many liberals the Hiss case exemplified a Republican smear job on the entire New Deal, Mrs. Trilling saw it in a very different way. Indeed, she was hardly shocked at Hiss's conviction, which she saw as a "retroactive victory" for the anti-Communist liberals, who had always known that some Communists would be guilty of treason to their country. Yet, there was a dilemma to be faced. To cheer his conviction put one in the same camp as the right wing. But the reality was that the liberal had been thrown "into the same camp with forces he detests, or should detest, as much as he detests Communists." Indeed, Mrs. Trilling called the new "enforced alignment between anti-Communist liberals and reactionaries" often "open and distasteful," and thus she sought a way to differentiate their response from that of the political right, from whom she sought a "clean break." Her method was one that would be repeated for years, often to little avail. The anti-Communist liberal, she wrote, must "insist on his right not to be labeled a reactionary just because reactionaries agree with him on this issue." To our present day, Diana Trilling's point has been ignored, despite many attempts to make the same explanation.

Mrs. Trilling acknowledged that Joe McCarthy's own hearings seemed to justify the claim of non-Communist and fellow-traveling liberals that a "grand-scale witch-hunt for Communists" in which "innocent liberals would be tarred with the Communist brush" was about to occur. But she did not agree. Hiss, as she pointed out, was not an innocent liberal. Acknowledging that perhaps McCarthy might smear some innocent liberals, she reminded her readers "had it not been for the Un-American Activities Committee, Hiss's guilt might never have been uncovered." And thus she uttered what until then was the unthinkable:

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One had to "reserve the possibility that a McCarthy, too, may turn up someone who is as guilty as Hiss."

But it was in her now-forgotten analysis of the Oppenheimer Affair that Diana Trilling was to make her signal contribution to the debate. The mid-1950s hearings before the Gray Commission, in which the nation's most prominent physicist, J. Robert Oppenheimer, was forced to defend his prewar political alliances and after which his security clearance would be revoked, is often cited as one of the major events that brought fear to the country's scientific and intellectual community. As usual, Mrs. Trilling had a quite different take on its meaning.

In her eyes, what was revealed by the sordid affair was the very "liberal culture of the time" that allowed an avowed pro-Soviet fellow traveler to receive security clearance in the first place. "The dominant liberal sentiment of the [1940s]," she wrote, "from the White House down," put its "whole blind force on the side of protecting friends of the Soviet Union." In Trilling's brilliant exegesis, she turned the table on how the Oppenheimer case was viewed. Oppenheimer had his security clearance revoked in 1954, when in her eyes he should have never received it in the first place. "Surely," she wrote, "it was the gravest of risks to trust him with secrets which the Soviet Union wanted so badly." But to then take his clearance away years later, after he had learned how wrong his fellow-traveling views were, was "tragic ineptitude." Hence, he was being punished for the Roosevelt administration's willingness to be "careless with our nation's security" during the years of the wartime alliance with Russia.

Moreover, Mrs. Trilling hardly saw the scientist as another victim. "Had Dr. Oppenheimer not once been sympathetic to Communism, there would have been no Oppenheimer case." Hence the issue was not Oppenheimer alone, but her own generation's refusal to face the truth about Communism. Thus, the hearings could not be seen as "a manifestation of McCarthyism." Many "conscientious, thoughtful men and women" who firmly opposed McCarthy, people like her own group, agreed when examining the evidence brought before the Atomic Energy Commission that Oppenheimer "[did] not meet the tests of a good security risk." And these people, she stressed, were from the "liberal camp."

Diana Trilling thus made refusal to adhere to the tenets of the Popular Front a main principle for comprehending McCarthyism. Men like Oppenheimer, whose own record had been relentlessly pro-Communist, did not. Thus she pointed out that by his own testimony he failed to understand "that there is but a single criterion of a proper knowledge of the nature of the Soviet Union—the awareness that the Soviet Union

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is a totalitarianism as absolute as that of Nazi Germany. . .and that. . . one also knows how impossible it is for a local Communist Party to be free to pursue its own objectives." McCarthy and his supporters may have screamed "Twenty Years of Treason" as an epithet for the Democratic Party's years in power. That charge would not have had any merit had mainstream liberalism not been directed at "persuading the American people that Russia was our great ally instead of the enemy of democracy and peace."

Diana Trilling's point about Hiss and Oppenheimer was treated in a similar fashion by the literary intellectual Leslie Fiedler, in what was to become a much more widely known essay. Fiedler wrote that Hiss was a symbol of "the Popular Front mind at bay, incapable of honesty when there is no hope in anything else." Hiss's guilt was in fact that of his entire generation of liberals, who shared in his guilt when they defended him. Like Hiss, they argued that "service to the party and the Soviet Union is an expression of 'loyalty,' not 'treason'," since it was preferable to the "bourgeois success of the American Dream" which for the Left was "the final treachery." Hiss, in fact, had attained the pinnacle of success in the nation that he betrayed. He achieved this because it was the Popular Front that allowed him to serve both his own government and the Soviet Union. And well-meaning liberals shared Hiss's guilt, because they too "collaborated in the hoax" of Soviet-American unity, which had been resurrected after the collapse of the Nazi-Soviet Pact.

To those liberals, their enemy was Whittaker Chambers, whom they viewed as a "scorned squealer." Hiss was simply a "hopeless liar." Fiedler pointed to the anomaly that not everyone accused by the McCarthyites was innocent. Those who viewed everyone who was left of center as a Red made the same mistake as those who exonerated everyone accused who denied their guilt, that of failing to distinguish between an actual liberal and a Stalinist. The liberals who exonerated Hiss and spent their energy condemning the Un-American Activities Committee out of fear that they would be "playing into the hands of the enemy," were thereby giving the McCarthyites the honor of being the only ones telling the truth. Thus Fiedler saw the Hiss case as that of a generation on trial, one that substituted "sentimentality for intelligence." Its members did not all serve the GPU, but committed a worse sin; they denied its very existence. And so, Fiedler concluded, the "age of innocence" was dead.

If the debate over Alger Hiss's guilt or innocence was less controversial—for a good many believed that Hiss was guilty—the debate over the charges made against Owen Lattimore, a distinguished China

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scholar, was a different story. McCarthy, after all, had singled out Lattimore as a major Soviet spy—"Alger Hiss's boss," he called him. Indeed, the Senator went so far as to claim that he would "stand or fall" on his case against Lattimore, whom he called the "top Soviet espionage agent in the United States." Later he would back down, and say that perhaps he had "placed too much stress on the question of whether he is a paid espionage agent," since the real issue was "his position of tremendous power in the State Department as the 'architect' of our Far Eastern policy."

Lattimore fought back, appearing willingly before the Senate to answer the charges. In so doing, he gained the support and backing of most of the liberal community. As Lattimore's most recent biographer, Robert P. Newman, has written, "in truth [Lattimore] had [no influence] whatsoever"; hence the claim that his policies had led to the "loss of China" were nothing less than preposterous. The eulogy, written by Newman, is perhaps the judgment most held at present. According to him, Lattimore was right in most of his observations; "his track record is remarkable." And Newman concludes that he was "right to hold" both McCarthy and the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee in contempt, since it was "accumulating perhaps the greatest mass of lies and perjuries ever assembled in the halls of Congress." And he attributes Lattimore's "refusal to knuckle under, confess imagined sins, or run away" as the factor that perhaps "stiffened the spines of others under attack."

While the attacks on Lattimore were taking place, first from McCarthy and later from the Senate committee chaired by Nevada's Senator Pat McCarran, the anti-Communist liberal intellectuals responded quite differently. Once again, Diana Trilling looked at the record, and concluded that evidence introduced proved that Lattimore "consistently and consciously undertook to do what the Soviet Union wanted done" in his editorial capacity at the Institute for Pacific Relations (IPR). True, she wrote, he was not a "spy or an agent or even a member of the Communist Party." He was, however, "something far more dangerous," an individual who served Communist policy while appearing to be independent. She wrote that he was an honest and independent thinker "whose idealism just happened to coincide with Russian realism." As an intellectual herself, Mrs. Trilling realized that her observations provided a dilemma. One could not legislate those such as Lattimore out of existence, "without simultaneously legislating true independence of thought out of existence too." Her point was, rather,

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that at least liberals had to be clear about what it was that Owen Lattimore believed.

In a similar fashion, writers for the socialist anti-Communist publication, the *New Leader*, joined in. Granville Hicks, himself once a literary Communist, reserved his anger for liberals who he thought played into McCarthy's hands by "rallying with such absolute assurance to Lattimore's defense," especially since even if he was innocent, "he may still be wrong in his views on China." The publication's editor, Sol Levitas, wrote that Lattimore was guilty of a worse sin than being a spy. Proclaiming the China scholar to be a "LitAg" of the Kremlin, Levitas wrote that he was an individual who sought to harm American foreign policy by molding public opinion to favor a pro-Soviet course. Such a service made him of more value to Stalin than a thousand other actual American Communists.

Irving Kristol offered by far the most comprehensive view of the Lattimore case. Kristol's position was made clear in his lengthy and provocative discussion of Owen Lattimore. It was this essay, Diana Trilling had written in her own discussion of Lattimore, that was "the most telling statement I have yet seen of the exact nature of Lattimore's offense." Kristol did what few other liberal commentators did; he read and learned from the McCarran Committee's report on the Institute for Pacific Relations. First, Kristol examined Lattimore's own testimony before the Tydings Committee. Kristol argued that in 1935 and 1936, Lattimore had favored a tough American policy towards Japan, at a time when the Communists "were insisting that the United States intervene to prevent Japan from gobbling up China." Lattimore, in other words, had confirmed exactly how his own positions dovetailed with those of the Soviet Union.

Taking up McCarthy's charge that it was Lattimore and the other China hands that had lost China, Kristol argued that what they had actually done was support denial of aid to Chiang Kai-Shek unless he agreed to a coalition government with Mao and the Chinese Communists. The inevitable result of their proposals, Kristol argued, would be a result that Lattimore and others "smugly and foolishly thought to be the only 'constructive' programme suitable for their advanced political sensibilities." Agreeing that Lattimore "was no spy in the sense that Alger Hiss was," and that McCarthy's description of him "was irresponsible and wide of the mark," Kristol argued that Lattimore was nevertheless an individual who posed a real danger to American policy. He was, Kristol wrote, a man transported "by the conviction of his own infinite innocence and righteousness." Thus he saw Lattimore as the

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type of academic who translated Communist dogma into academic rhetoric, where it could not be deciphered easily. Thus, he knew enough not to describe Mao's Communist troops as "agrarian reformers," as some of the China hands called them—but rather referred to Mao's Yenan area by "the more pompous, 'dynamic popular government in North China'." And he was so successful that his views became those of "the entire body of respectable opinion—conservative as well as liberal—on the Far East." Thus "ingratiating pseudo-Marxist platitudes became the stock-in-trade of all the 'experts'," a modern *trahison des clercs*.

Perhaps, however, the most succinct statement about Lattimore came once again from Sidney Hook. Writing to a critical correspondent, Hook pointed to what he called the "opinionated ignorance" of those abroad who believed that Lattimore was "a well-meaning liberal martyrized by McCarthy for telling unpalatable truths about Asia." The fact, to the contrary, was that Lattimore "at the very least, was a devious and skillful follower of the Communist Party line on Asian affairs." Moreover, Lattimore had hardly suffered as a result of his so-called ordeal. "Allegedly hunted as a witch," Hook wrote, he was "secure in his job, published a best-seller, and still exercises a professional influence. . .greater than all anti-Communists combined."

Even Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. found it hard to defend the embattled Asia scholar. Schlesinger opposed the indictment of Lattimore for perjury, made on grounds that he had not told the truth when he denied remembering visits with a Soviet diplomat years earlier, to which he had testified before the McCarran Committee. Schlesinger made it clear that he thought the prosecution to be "outrageous." But that did not mean, Schlesinger wrote to Thurman Arnold, that he had to regard Lattimore "as a great liberal with a consistent anti-totalitarian record." Like Kristol and Hook, Schlesinger pointed to Lattimore's now-famous endorsement of the Moscow purge trials written in 1938, in which he notes that Lattimore "defends every item of Stalinist justice." While Lattimore wrote that the Moscow Trials "sounds to me like democracy," Schlesinger concluded that his words "sound to me like fellow-traveling." And like Mrs. Trilling, Schlesinger urged the eminent judge to read Irving Kristol's article on Lattimore. Moreover, the few anti-Communist statements he found in Lattimore's book, *Ordeal by Slander*, were "a pathetic list." In fact, he found from reading Lattimore's book that he really "was opposed to fascism but was not opposed to Communism." To Schlesinger, there was a simple dividing line: "I have never seen any reason to admire men who," he explained, "under

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the pretense of liberalism, continued to justify and whitewash the realities of Soviet Communism."

There were, of course, differences among these intellectuals. The central issue was the exact nature of the threat posed by Communism to American democracy. Many of the liberal anti-Communists broke with the hard right over the issue of McCarthy's anti-Communist crusade. When James Burnham argued that McCarthyism was a non-existent invention of Communists, and that the Senator had to be backed, the New York intellectuals struck back. Answering Burnham's endorsement of McCarthy in the pages of their journal *Partisan Review*, William Phillips and Philip Rahv argued "anti-Communism is strengthened rather than weakened by outright opposition to McCarthy and his methods." And when Max Eastman unabashedly defended McCarthy at an April 1952 forum, Richard Rovere, Dwight Macdonald, and Mary McCarthy demanded that the American Committee for Cultural Freedom take a vigorous stand against Joe McCarthy. The problem, Rovere wrote Schlesinger, was that they had to make it apparent that their anti-Communism was "of a different sort entirely from McCarthy's," and show that "American anti-Communism is not the blind, stupid, selfish thing" that was being portrayed. Rovere was concerned that Communist fellow travelers would make capital out of Eastman's pro-McCarthy position, and use it to brand all of them indiscriminately as McCarthyites. Moreover, Rovere was certain that Eastman did not "give a damn about cultural freedom." In response, Sidney Hook, who had been sent a copy of the letter to Schlesinger, assured Rovere that "I have found no one who agrees with Eastman's position" and that he was pleased that Rovere, Mary McCarthy, and Elmer Rice had attacked "what you call McCarthyism and what I call cultural vigilantism." Indeed, Hook stressed "Eastman irresponsibly defended McCarthy by name to the overwhelming *disapproval* of the audience, including almost all of our members present." Hook did note that some in his group did believe that McCarthyism was not as dangerous as Communism, but, he wrote, "surely it is permissible to entertain different ideas about the relative degrees of danger involved in each *while being firmly opposed to both*."

In reality, the issue that divided anti-Communist liberal intellectuals like Sidney Hook, Diana Trilling, and Leslie Fiedler from those like Rovere and Schlesinger, was the issue of how precisely to deal with American Communism. It was, as Hook put it, "not an easy problem." Although Rovere objected to Irving Kristol's analysis, in some ways he made very similar points. In 1952, *The Nation*, a magazine identified

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with the Popular Front during the war and with pro-Soviet policies in the early Cold War, had published a special issue they called "How Free is Free?" in which its editors itemized the ways they thought American society had succumbed to fear. Writing in the socialist *New Leader*, Rovere objected to the journal's "spurious brand of anti-McCarthyism," even though he thought some of the contributors had made valid arguments. But a special issue gave the impression that American democracy itself was in a weak state, and would work "to encourage the world to accept Radio Moscow's view of the United States" as a "disintegrating democracy" in which hooligan McCarthyites held power. As for McCarthy, Rovere emphasized that even he was only after Communists. He had not heard him "protesting that there are 205 liberals in the State Department, as I am sure there are." What was needed was a sound loyalty program that would successfully "distinguish between liberals and Communists." Accompanying the article was a sidebar prepared by the editors, which showed in detail how many contributors to *The Nation* special issue were affiliated with Communist fronts.

What, then, did the intellectuals believe was the proper way to deal with the actual threat to American democracy posed by members of the Communist Party? The most controversial differences took place over how to deal with Communists who were members of the academic community. Hook firmly believed, as he reiterated over and over, that proven membership in the Communist Party was alone sufficient grounds on which to remove an individual from his teaching job. In his eyes, any true Communist believed and acted upon Party instructions to use the classroom for proselytizing, and for introducing Marxist-Leninist interpretations as truths to be learned. To Hook, it was the burden of the Communist teacher to prove that even though he was a member of the Party, he did not obey its program or let it interfere with his role in the classroom. Schlesinger argued, contrary to Hook, that performance in the classroom could alone be the standard on which to judge an individual's capabilities and suitability for employment, and not his beliefs.

When it came to the issue of Communists working in the Federal Government, however, there was unanimity. The liberal editor and journalist James A. Wechsler stated the issue most clearly years before McCarthy came on the scene. Writing in *Harper's*, Wechsler pointed out that Communists were not members of a regular political party, but rather were "organized instruments of Russian espionage." They had a right to express their ideas, but that was quite different than asserting they had an intrinsic right to a government job. Almost predicting the rise of someone like McCarthy, Wechsler wrote: "If liberals cannot face

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the reality of Communist intrigue as they once recognized the scope of the fascist fifth column, the Congressional cops will run the show." Liberals had to purge the Communists first, or a "witch-hunt may truly be upon us." Ironically, years later, it was Wechsler himself who became a major target of McCarthy, who tried through a brutal interrogation of the anti-Communist editor to paint him as a secret Communist.

Wechsler's arguments were reinforced the same week in a parallel article penned by Schlesinger. The historian acknowledged that the right was using the cry of Communism to silence legitimate critics of the American political system. Nevertheless, he also stressed that American Communists were servants of the Soviet expansionist system, and that the Communist Party was "a unique means of getting, recruiting and testing potential agents," a point that has been verified most recently by the Venona revelations.

For that reason, Schlesinger wrote that the government had a right to discharge potential security risks "in advance of an overt act." The problem for Schlesinger was the institution of such standards. The State Department had denied discharged employees the right to a hearing, and was verging on what he called "the realm of persecution." That meant the necessity of fair standards. Like Kristol in 1952, Schlesinger insisted upon the need to distinguish between liberals and Communists. "Liberals who complain when Parnell Thomas fails to distinguish between liberals and Communists," he wrote, "should remember that too often they have failed to make that distinction themselves."

It was this distinction that the anti-Communist liberal intellectuals insisted upon from the start. A former editor of *The Nation* magazine, who did not go along with that journal's Popular Front position, tried hard to spell out the necessary distinction. Wishing not to deny "or belittle the inroads being made by the McCarthys on the constitutional liberties of Americans," such as state loyalty oaths for teachers, journalist Robert Bendiner wrote, did not mean "a whole apparatus of informers, secret police and terrorism had been imposed on the country." What liberals ignored at their own peril was the actual nature of the American Communist Party:

> After years of ridiculing every serious contention that the Communist party was. . .a conscious and active political conspiracy; of minimizing its capacity for mischief and insisting that it was merely another political party. . . .These liberal victims of self-delusion find it hard to face that evidence that in addition to Red-baiters there are also Reds.

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America's severe problems, Bendiner stressed, did not have their origins in democracy, nor were they created by the Joe McCarthys and Pat McCarrans of the world. It was "Russian-fomented conflict" that allowed "a McCarthy to exploit the very real fears and resentments of a people who only want to be left in peace." To Bendiner, McCarthyism was a reflection "of the international position that has been forced upon us by Soviet aggression." The implication was clear: Had liberals done their part in dealing with Stalinism, nothing would have been left for demagogues to exploit. There was, as Bendiner argued, a very real threat from abroad. And to deal with that threat, it was the responsibility of liberals not only to jettison the Popular Front, but also to join with conservatives with whom they differed to isolate the pro-Communist Left, "no matter how much aid and comfort that might give the McCarthys of the country." One could not simply cry "hysteria" every time a Communist was exposed, "on the ground that his political beliefs are private." Civil liberties were the cry of fellow travelers who sought to hide their true agenda behind the facade of repression.

Irving Kristol, however, developed what was the sharpest and most controversial of the positions on McCarthy taken by any liberal anti-Communist. Assessing the damage done by Joe McCarthy for *Commentary*, Kristol agreed that McCarthy was nothing but a "vulgar demagogue." But for all his faults, Kristol wrote, he had one important positive virtue: "For there is one thing that the American people know about Senator McCarthy; he, like them, is unequivocally anti-Communist. About the spokesman for American liberalism, they feel they know no such thing, and with some justification." Kristol's emphasis was not on McCarthy, whom he correctly assumed all his compatriots were opposed. Rather, it was on the inability of many liberals to reflect accurately about the danger of domestic Communism.

Thus Kristol counted on his list of weak-minded liberals such famous personalities as the journalist Alan Barth of the *Washington Post*, the historian Henry Steele Commager, the legal scholar Zechariah Chafee, the writer Howard Mumford Jones, Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas, and FDR's former Attorney General, Frances Biddle. These men, part of a generation of "earnest reformers who helped give this country a New Deal," Kristol explained, were all "stained with the guilt of having lent aid and comfort to Stalinist tyranny." When men like these stooped to defending an Owen Lattimore and his pro-Communist record, they played McCarthy's game, "but on the losing side." Similarly, Kristol pointed out that when Commager attacked McCarthy or the House Committee on Un-American Activities for investigating the

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Communist front National Lawyers Guild, without first trying to find out if in fact it *was* a Communist front, it was simply irresponsible. Had he done so, he would have found that the Red-hunters of the HCUA were in fact right, revealing these "fronts for what they are." Moreover, Kristol asserted that liberals should not attack the FBI for sending in undercover agents into the Communist Party. When Alan Barth claimed that such covert action was an interference with the right to privacy, he had only shifted the blame "from the Communist conspirators to the FBI agents who identified them."

Kristol's logic applied to loyalty oaths as well. Liberals should oppose them as ineffective, he argued, since a Communist would willingly lie and sign them, while an honest civil libertarian might refuse and then be fired unjustly as a Communist. What Kristol was saying was that liberals had to discriminate between their real achievements and their sins, or allow McCarthy and his ilk to make it appear that the liberals' achievements were their sins. Joining the effort to uproot Communism was not a bad policy, and would not contribute to a climate of fear. As for Communists losing their jobs after refusing to answer the questions put to them by Red-hunting members of Congress, Kristol retorted that he had no pity for any liberal who wailed that Communists were "in danger of being excluded from well-paying jobs!" One could not forget that Communism was not just another idea, but was rather a "conspiracy to subvert every social and political order it does not dominate." To tolerate Communists was thus to tolerate a conspiracy against the democratic polity. As Irving Kristol summed up: "So long as liberals agree with Senator McCarthy that the fate of communism involves the fate of liberalism and that we must choose between complete civil liberties for everyone and a disregard for civil liberties entirely, we shall make no progress except to chaos." As for the defense of the rights of Communists to speak, Kristol had no objection, as long as liberals spoke as "one of *us* defending *their* liberties," lest they be "taken as speaking as one of them."

The response to Irving Kristol's article revealed the extent of the differences fellow anti-Communist liberals had with him. Rovere differed greatly with Kristol's tough essay. He agreed that some liberals accorded Communists a sympathy they did not deserve. But Rovere argued that Kristol was using the same logic as the naive fellow-traveling liberals. These types tolerated Communists because the Reds spoke as men of the left, used much the same language as the liberals, and gained sympathy because Joe McCarthy treated them as brutally as he did actual Communists. But while they tolerated Communists simply because they were

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McCarthy's victims, Rovere accused Kristol of tolerating McCarthy because he too was opposed to Communists. Kristol, he argued, was covering up for McCarthy "just as Mr. Barth and Professor Commager sometimes cover up for Communists." Yet, Rovere too made it clear that he realized stern measures had to be taken to deal with the real danger of America's domestic Communists. While he was opposed to loyalty oaths and "scoundrels like McCarthy," Rovere backed the provisions of the McCarran Internal Security Act, "which calls for the internment of all Communists known to the FBI immediately upon the outbreak of war," as "sound and necessary." Others compared the measure to the wartime internment of Japanese Americans. But Rovere pointed out that the wartime camps were based on the "illogic of race," while this internment was to be based on "the logic of politics," and it would meet the test of a "clear and present danger." Similarly, Rovere supported the prosecution of Communists under the terms of the Smith Act, which he saw as addressing Party members as conspirators and which did not "involve civil liberties in any important way." FBI agents had provided the evidence by which they had been convicted, he noted, and those found guilty were not "denied their rights." In a similar fashion, Rovere praised Alger Hiss's conviction as a "triumph of due process" as well as a triumph for the HCUA. If that committee had always abided by its procedures in the Hiss inquiry, he wrote, "no one could raise any reasonable objection to it."

And like his colleague Schlesinger, Americans for Democratic Action (ADA) chairman Joseph L. Rauh, Jr., one of the most prominent Washington, D.C. liberals, expressed his disappointment that Kristol did not understand that authentic liberals were already "anti-Communist enough." Rauh noted that the ADA excluded Communists from its ranks at the start, and in 1948 it led "the successful drive to expose and deflate the Progressive Party as an arm of Soviet foreign policy." But Rauh still defended the decision of some liberals to work with Communists during the wartime Popular Front. Communists, he argued, had taken part on the terms set by liberals, and were forced to pay lip service to liberal—and not Communist—ideals. Kristol, however, found support from the Socialist Party's leader, Norman Thomas, who praised Kristol for understanding what real civil liberties were about. In his own book, published two years later, Thomas agreed that it was "a serious liberal error, contributing to the rise of McCarthyism, that so many liberals so long minimized the Communist evil." Like Kristol, Thomas believed that it was Communism "that occasioned the rise of McCarthyism." He chastised liberals for thinking that because

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"McCarthyism is bad on the whole, therefore none of its elements are necessary or even defensible." And like Sidney Hook, he believed that Communists had no right to teach, since they had abandoned "their freedom to serve truth," and were members of an "external conspiratorial authority." As for McCarthy, Thomas saw through the Senator's game. He made "noisy, indiscriminate criticism of communism" and named Communists he could not identify. His tactics only helped the Communists, giving them respectability by allowing them to confuse themselves "with decent dissenters."

Aside from the obvious fellow travelers and pro-Communists, opposition to the analysis of the liberal anti-Communists came from those to their left who had begun their political life in the small Trotskyist community. One of the first to espouse anti-anti-Communism was the young socialist, Michael Harrington. Looking at the position taken by the members of the American Committee for Cultural Freedom, Harrington was aghast at the logic used by many whom he regarded as political comrades. Harrington saw their arguments as part of a "systematic, explicit effort to minimize the threat to civil liberties." Moreover, their drive against civil liberties was being carried out in the name of anti-Stalinism. In particular, Harrington condemned his mentor Norman Thomas's support of the charges made against Owen Lattimore as "sad—indeed, humiliating." That Thomas, Harrington wrote, "identified in American eyes with the cause of socialism, should have let himself be put in the position of defending" Senator Pat McCarran's charges revealed to him something about "the debacle of American radicalism and liberal politics in general." Like Popular Front liberals, it seemed, Harrington too seemed unable to make the distinction between liberals and Communists that Hook, Diana Trilling, Schlesinger, and Rovere demanded.

Further to the left, Irving Howe, the literary critic and once a revolutionary Trotskyist, had started his own magazine, *Dissent*, as a medium from which to reassert the values of democratic socialism, as well as to distinguish himself and his comrades from the anti-Communist liberals and socialists like Sidney Hook. Thus Howe referred to the "willfulness of those who see only terror and the indifference of those who see only health," and demanded acceptance of his belief that "intellectual freedom. . .is under severe attack and the intellectuals have. . .shown a painful lack of militancy in defending the rights" of those accused by the McCarthyites. Howe, for the first time, condemned *Commentary* in particular for trying to adapt liberalism to the status quo, and sarcastically commented that "the magazine was more deeply preoccupied. . .

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with the dangers to freedom stemming from people like Freda Kirchwey [editor of *The Nation*] and Arthur Miller than the dangers from people like Senator McCarthy."

At stake, the historian Mary S. McAuliffe has written, were two very different views of the world. To the liberals of *The Nation*, she commented, "the United States was in the grips of hysteria, and it defined the hysterical as those who so feared the threat of Communism that they responded by subverting basic civil liberties in their hunt for Communists." To the anti-Communist liberals of the *New Leader*, and one would have to add those associated with both *Commentary* and *Partisan Review*,

> hysteria was rampant and dangerous, but. . .the international and domestic Communist menace was real, and those alert to its threat were realistic. Those who thought that McCarthy commanded any real power and had committed any real damage were the ones who were hysterical. . . .[They] emphatically did not approve of McCarthy, but. . .concluded that McCarthyism had not permeated American society and that McCarthy posed no real threat to American liberties. The real danger. . .was from creeping Communism, not creeping McCarthyism.

It is true that despite their differences, the anti-Communist liberals unanimously held one assumption. They all argued that one could maintain a commitment to civil liberties and at the same time oppose participation with Communists in joint efforts, and therefore could and should exclude them from membership in liberal organizations. It was not McCarthyism when the ADA charter excluded Communists from membership, or when the American Civil Liberties Union expelled the Communist leader Elizabeth Gurley Flynn from its board. Similarly, they held, with great merit, that it was not a violation of civil liberties to point out that Communists had no right to a government job. As Hook stressed over and over again, Communists had a right to express their ideas, and to have them debated in the public marketplace. It was not their ideas they favored banning, but their demands for jobs through which they could subvert America's national security, which was quite a different thing.

Throughout their writing, the anti-Communist liberals and socialists grappled with tough questions at a volatile moment in our nation's recent past. Trying to steer a careful middle ground between acquiescence to demagoguery and the violation of civil liberties on the one

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hand, and softness towards totalitarianism and Communism on the other, their position was found to be unsatisfactory by those on both the hard left and far right. As the years passed—and McCarthyism has become a study of the past rather than, thankfully, a phenomenon of the present—the tough-minded arguments and debates held by the intellectual community have become subject of a pervasive and ever growing myth. Its members have been accused of either being subservient to McCarthyism, of having failed to protest it sufficiently, or even of paving the ground for Joe McCarthy himself, and finally, of helping his anti-Communist crusade once he arrived on the scene. The evidence about their views, obtained easily from reading their dialogues and debates in various publications, belies all of these assertions. It makes it clear that while as a group they had various differences on certain issues, they were all clear about two things above all else: they despised McCarthy and considered him to be a demagogue and a thug. They also knew that the stark reality of a dangerous international Communist movement, along with its American counterpart, posed a real imminent and serious threat to American democracy. They demanded that liberals not abandon dealing with how to confront that threat, lest they relinquish that task to McCarthy and his kind alone. Unlike many others, they refused to be fooled into believing that anyone attacked by McCarthy, McCarran, or the House Committee on Un-American Activities was a noble and innocent martyred liberal.

So many decades later, it is time to set the record straight, and to rescue the thought and the effort these intellectuals made in a dark and troubled time. Not everything they wrote was correct; some of their observations and bromides were way off base. But as a group, they avoided the trap Joe McCarthy had tried to set for them—that of getting them to defend the innocence of actual Communists because he had targeted liberals among his enemies. Now that the legitimacy of their opposition to Communism has been affirmed by historical events, it is time to stop confusing their anti-Communism with support of McCarthyism.

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MARK KURLANSKY

A Letter from Dresden

DRESDEN, GERMANY was the perfect place to have spent the closing days of the twentieth century. Across the wide and curving Elbe, in the Baroque historic city center, where blackened sandstone fairies cavort from ancient rooftops, the clink of stonemasons and the grumble of earth movers could be heard. Workers waddled by with wheelbarrows full of debris. Once the work is done, Dresden, and by extension, Germany, will be new again.

In 1945, German novelist Thomas Mann described Germans as "a people that can never show its face again." Since then, Germany has been in a continual state of reinvention and redefinition, searching for an acceptable way to show it. To show one's face is a natural urge.

The air raid that Dresdeners are now digging out from took place in early 1945. By then, the Allies had already destroyed most German cities, even many small towns. But it was rumored that Germany's most beautiful city, the so-called Florence of the north, was to be spared, having been selected by the Americans as their headquarters in the coming Occupied Germany. Believing the rumor, refugees from all over Germany huddled in the safety of Dresden.

On the evening of February 13, 1945, as Dresdeners turned out for Shrove Tuesday celebrations in the historic center of town, 786 British RAF bombers dropped 2,647 tons of bombs on the city. The following morning the U.S. Army Air Force attacked with another 316 bombers. The first bombs shattered buildings and were followed by incendiary bombs which swallowed the city in flames. The Allies were reproducing a phenomenon they had accidentally discovered in their recent bombing of Hamburg. A wall of fire roared through the narrow medieval streets and then burst into the baroque plazas. The heat became so intense that the sandstone glowed red like forged steel, then crystallized, losing its structure and breaking apart. Some surviving buildings collapsed days later. The famous Frauenkirche, the largest Protestant church in Germany, tumbled into a heap of stone two days after the raid.

Initially, the German police claimed 18,000 dead. But in subsequent years the count has wavered between 30,000 and 130,000. Germany

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fell, and with little chance for recrimination against the rest of the world, Germans have, for a half-century, denounced the bombing of Dresden as cruel and unnecessary. No military target was located in the city. The raid appears to have been aimed at the destruction of historic buildings. It is still remembered that way. Christoph Munch, a young West German who worked for the Dresden Tourist Board, said to me, "They wanted to break the German people, so they destroyed what they most cared about." He stared into my eyes expectantly, the same way many Germans have over the years, hoping that I, as an American, would show remorse. I still remember a German more than twenty years ago asserting, "The bombing of Dresden was the worst atrocity of World War II."

The Dresden bombing has held a special place in German history as the one incident of World War II in which Germans—good Germans, new Germans—have seriously tried to claim that Germany was the victim. Curiously, they single out the Americans as the perpetrators, even though it was principally a British operation. But the British, having had their own cities bombed by the Germans, have not been prone to feeling guilty about Dresden.

But now there is a new approach to Dresden—forgetting rather than remembering. Since the reunification of Germany in October 1990, about $47 billion, some private and some government funds, has been spent on rebuilding the city from its half-century-old rubble.

Before it was bombed into a ruin, Dresden, the capital of Saxony, had been one of the prized centers of Germany. The old-walled medieval town reached its golden age in the eighteenth century under August the Strong (August der Starke, 1670–1733) who brought together Italian, French, and German culture. August rebuilt the city and gave it its baroque look of swirling ornament, bell-shaped domes and curvaceous spires. He enlarged the thirteenth-century castle in Baroque style and built the Swinger, a kind of German Baroque Versailles, in which splendid gardens face glassed-in passageways and the dark stone exteriors are made to seem as light as lace by statues and stone garlands bubbling up from the copper roofs. Huge international events took place in the Swinger where the political map of Europe was reconfigured over drinks and music. The Frauenkirche, a rounded building capped by a dome in an even larger dome was built by concerned citizens to defy August who, as part of a successful bid to become King of Poland, converted to Catholicism. The huge dome became the symbol of Dresden—like an Eiffel Tower or an Empire State Building. Bach gave the

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Frauenkirche's first organ concert. Weber and Wagner were among the composers at the opera house.

But for forty-five years after the 1945 bombing, the view across the Elbe was of the piles of stone, staircases overgrown with bushes, wall fragments silhouetted against the sky, the skeleton of one burned-out dome sticking out above overgrown rubble piles in a huge vacant lot that had been cleared with bulldozers.

In 1949, when the Cold War began with Germany splitting into West and East, Dresden was on the Eastern side. East Germany saw itself as a bold new experiment, a radical departure from the old and profoundly disastrous Germany. East Germany, the German Democratic Republic, found a perfect convergence of political rhetoric and economic reality. They did not have the money to completely rebuild their cities, but in leaving central Berlin with bullet holes and crumbling walls, and Dresden with its charred remains, they were creating monuments to the horror the fascists had brought on the German people.

In the new East Germany, history was not to be forgotten. Every February 13, Dresden schoolchildren were gathered to remember the bombing. Townspeople went to the remaining charred tower facing the pile of rocks that was once the Frauenkirche, and lit candles.

All this ended in 1990 along with East Germany. The West Germans, unlovingly known here as the Wessies, arrived with their own brand of *wiedergutmachung*, making it good again. It was all so nice before the Communists and the Nazis, they said, couldn't we just put it back the way it was?

New York-based scientist Günter Blobel, who as a child refugee from Silesia had been just outside of Dresden and saw it before and after the bombing, had never forgotten either sight. He started a drive to raise millions of dollars for the rebuilding of the Frauenkirche. In 1999, he won the Nobel Prize in medicine and donated his prize money, almost one million dollars, to his fund to rebuild the church. A tall man with a thick cloud of white hair, Blobel dismisses twentieth-century history with an impatient flick of his arm. "I want beautiful spaces. Why should we take these stupid, banal, evil dictators as our identity? Why let them dictate what we live with?"

That Nazism and Communism were two similar evils has been emerging as the great lie of the twentieth century. Following this argument, West Germans sometimes imply that the Third Reich and the German Democratic Republic were comparable—both dictatorships. This subtle revisionism has the dual function of blackening Communism and glossing over the crimes of the Holocaust.

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East Germans recall, not irrationally, that anti-Communism, not Communism, has always been the Nazis' brother ideology. It was one of Hitler's most effective propaganda tactics. Germans who supported Hitler said they were fighting Communism. Germans who distrusted the Nazis tended to associate them with Communists, probably because Communists had always been presented as the embodiment of evil. Victor Klemperer, a Dresden Jew, wrote in his diary in February 1934 that friends who disliked the Nazis wanted Hitler to remain secure so that the Nazis would not resort to Communism. He wrote, "The impression is growing that the government is sliding toward Communism." That was after less than a year of Nazism. By his death in 1960, he would learn that Nazism and Communism were very different forms of dictatorship.

It was the Cold War, the imperative of fighting Communism, that created West Germany and ended the Allies' process of "denazification," the war crimes trials that were to purge Nazis from German society. Some who might have been tried or at least disgraced were saved by the Cold War and went on to important positions in government and business. The East German government often reported on this, showing their people how the fascists thrived in the other system. Anti-anti-Communism, of course, was the East German form of Cold War propaganda. While living under an increasingly arbitrary secret police, neighbors forced to spy on their friends, the oppressed East German could focus on the lingering fascist legacy in West Germany. They could endure their own government's oppression and failures by focusing on a sense of mission—building the new antifascist Germany.

Meanwhile, in West Germany, any embarrassment from the past could soon be brushed aside with a stand against the Communists. In 1999, this was seen one more time when former Chancellor Helmut Kohl was caught having received huge quantities of illegal campaign contributions. His initial response was to claim he had needed the money to fight the incredible strength of the Communist Party in the East.

Today East and West Germans are left with this irreconcilable difference. To East Germans, Communism was not an evil ideology comparable to Nazism, but a worthy dream led astray by ruthless, evil leadership. Brigit Stoof, a young Dresdener with hair dyed electric copper, and rectangular glasses frames, said of her fellow East Germans, "People who are over fifty are asked to accept that all their dreams were nothing." East Germans do not miss the secret police but they do miss the sense of a mission.

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Since the reunification of Germany—that is the term always used because it has been unified before—the Wessies have been rushing to Dresden, pouring billions into building new old Dresden into one of Germany's leading tourist destinations. To boost the economy even further, Siemens built a microchip factory, and Volkswagen built a glassed-in plant where a customer can spend two days watching his car being assembled. Yet the unemployment rate remains high and Wessies seem to get the bulk of the new jobs.

The new tourist literature, in giving the history of the city, seldom offers a date between 1918, when the Saxon monarchy was abolished, and the 1945 bombing. "The Friends of Dresden" brochure which raises money for the rebuilding of the Frauenkirche, offers no date between an 1843 Wagner debut and the 1945 bombing. Photographs of the blackened rubble, some of it untouched until very recently, can be easily seen. Less available is the 1934 picture of little Nazi boys in brown shirts, all at attention for the visit of Nazi Propaganda Minister Josef Göbbels to the city, or the 1944 photo of thousands of Dresdeners cheering flags of the Third Reich, the graceful arches of the fourteenth-century Augustus bridge across the Elbe in the background.

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I FLEW INTO DRESDEN from Munich on a Sunday afternoon. This flight is always full of Wessies returning from their weekend shopping in the West, festooned in voluptuous furs, supple leather, and designer everything.

In the heart of old Dresden, I seemed to be in the center of an old German city. Patches of virgin stone filling in missing parts on a statue, a crest, or a wall, were subtle reminders, along with the scaffolding on the unfinished Frauenkirche and Dresden Castle, of what otherwise appeared to be a well-preserved eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European city.

It is not only the East German nation and the East German ideology that the Ossies are now told meant nothing, but also the East German buildings. The old center of Dresden is surrounded by East Germany—monotonously repetitious, cheaply fabricated rows of low-ceilinged, unornamented buildings. "I never thought it was ugly. I thought it was modern socialism," said Brigit Stoof.

In truth, the West German architecture of the '60s and '70s was no better. It was all concrete, harsh and stark—Bauhaus gone wrong. Where the West Germans have tried to build their own modern architecture in

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Dresden, it has been unpopular with the Ossies. But where they have reconstructed eighteenth- and nineteenth-century buildings, Dresdeners have approved, and even demanded more rebuilding.

Stoof is the public relations manager for Hotel Taschenbergpalais. The Taschenbergpalais was an eighteenth-century mansion that had been reduced to crumbling stone walls and weed-covered rock piles until, after reunification, a group of private investors with $130 million rebuilt it into a 213-room luxury hotel. While I was staying there, the President of Nigeria, Olusegun Obasanjo, and his considerable entourage spent a night, periodically emerging for a motorcycle police escort through old Germany.

Stoof said that much of the money for the Taschenbergpalais had come "from West Germans who have too much money." *Too much money* is clearly an Ossie, not a Wessie, concept. A decade after "reunification," Ossies and Wessies still look and think so differently that they are immediately recognizable in a bar or on a street corner. The Ossies look defeated and the Wessies strut like conquerors. The demeanor, the body language would betray them even if the clothes and words did not.

One look at Ludwig Coulin—a tall man in an expensive trench coat and fashionable knit tie—and I knew he was a Wessie. "I am from Stuttgart. I have been here for four years and it is still a foreign country to me," he said. Coulin is an architect working on the reconstruction of the Dresden Castle, the roofless maze of collapsing renaissance walls that the Saxon state has already spent $100 million resurrecting.

If Ludwig Coulin's clothes had not revealed him to be a Wessie, his enthusiasm for the new reunited Germany would have. Ossies are not so sure. I am not so sure. And interestingly, this was all tied in with his enthusiasm for rebuilding Dresden. "This is a great thing for Germany. We didn't hope to see unification this century," he said pointing to scaffolding that was crisscrossing the courtyard of the castle. "This is a symbol of Germany's good fortune."

He volunteered later in our conversation, apropos of nothing, "I am very sure I came from the good part of Germany." When I pointed out that many East Germans feel the same way he said, "Yes, but they just don't remember."

Memory, of course, is the central German issue. The Dresden debate becomes more tense when discussing one of the last baroque buildings. In 1838, Gottfried Semper, the man who designed the opera house and the adjacent Old Masters Picture Gallery also designed a synagogue. The Jews prayed in Semper's Baroque palace that looked like the Christians' Baroque palaces, holding services that resembled those of the

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Protestants—in German and on Sundays rather than Saturdays. They believed in fitting into Dresden life.

On the night of November 9, 1938, when Jewish stores and synagogues throughout Germany were attacked, the Dresden synagogue was burned. The Tourist Board's Munch noted to me with irony that the synagogue could not be reconstructed because the ruins were destroyed in the 1945 bombing. But this does not seem to be the case. After the mob burned the synagogue, a "civic group" cleared the ruins, an operation for which the Jewish community was forced to pay. The Germans made a film to document this operation, a film now in the possession of the Jewish community. Heinz-Joachim Aris, the current director of the Dresden Jewish Community, then a small boy, remembers his father being forced to wear a yellow star as he and other Jews were made to gather the remaining stones from the synagogue and use them to pave streets.

Of the nearly 5,000 Jews who had lived in Dresden when Hitler came to power, by 1945 all but 198 had fled or been killed or were dying in concentration camps. With the Reich rapidly disintegrating, the German government was desperate to kill the last of the Jews. On Tuesday morning, February 13, the remaining Jews received orders to report for deportation to the camps on Friday. But that evening, when Dresden was destroyed, the roaring wall of fire that collapsed the beautiful Frauenkirche also destroyed Gestapo headquarters, and deportation from Dresden came to an end. Aris and his family were among the last 198 who survived because of the bombing.

Herbert Lappe, a Jewish engineer whose parents survived in England and returned in 1949, when he was three, said "When the Dresden people remember the bombing, some of the Jews remember how they survived." On February 13, when the city bells would ring to signal the gathering at the Frauenkirche rubble for the annual bombing memorial, Lappe's mother always refused to go. The Lappes had returned to East Germany from their wartime refuge in England to build the new Germany, the bold new experiment. They never foresaw a reunification that would leave Herbert stranded in an old Wessie-run Germany.

I met Lappe in the lobby of the Taschenbergpalais and, escaping the Nigerian entourage, we found a quiet corner behind an enormous Christmas tree. "Talking Jewish business behind the Christmas tree," Lappe quipped. By 1991 and the reunification of Germany, fifty Jews were left in Dresden. Every year the East German government would have a Hungarian cantor come to help them celebrate Passover and the Jewish New Year in a hall they still use as their synagogue and meeting place. Lappe, who is middle-aged, was the youngest remaining Jew of

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two Jewish parents. "I always thought it would be my job to close up," he said. But instead, Germany allowed in Soviet Jews, and 250 former Soviets with no religious background have become the majority of the Dresden community, still led by its aging elected President, Roman Koenig, a concentration camp survivor.

A group of Protestants raising money for the Frauenkirche felt strongly that it would be wrong to rebuild their church and not the synagogue. They formed a "Christian-Jewish friendship group." Lappe said, "As always happens with such groups, they were entirely Christian." They approached the Jewish community about rebuilding the synagogue and, to their surprise, found that the Jews did not want it back—the Baroque palace that was their parents' failed experiment in assimilation. They wanted to add something different to the cityscape, something that was not there before the bombing.

"It is friction," said Lappe. "It should be a needle in the town. Nothing aggressive. But people should see it and say, 'What is this?'" The Jewish Community has commissioned a concrete block, slightly twisted to face Jerusalem, with a courtyard that marks the outline of the original synagogue. By Dresden standards it is cheap to build, a mere ten million dollars. But Lappe is upset by efforts to raise the money in the United States. "I don't like this. I think it is a German thing. Germany has the idea that American Jews are rich, they can pay. Again the idea of the rich Jew. It is no problem for German companies to raise this money. The Germans destroyed the synagogue. There is no reason they shouldn't pay for a new one." But the new proposal offered by the Jewish Community is not the German idea of how to rebuild Dresden.

Not all Germans want to forget Germany's history. In 1995, Klemperer's diary was published. It is the journal of an aging academic working on his history of French literature while the German government and the people of Dresden slowly strip him of his rights and dignity and eventually almost his life—he, too, was saved by the bombing. Though 1,500 pages long, 140,000 copies of Klemperer's diary were sold in Germany.

Other curious controversies have arisen. The Dresden Castle was to be restored to its 1733 condition, the way August left it. But as stone fragments are fitted together, missing parts resculpted, and a fresh bright layer of gilding laid on, an argument has emerged. Should it look bright and shiny the way it did in 1733, or antique and historic the way it did in 1945 before the bombing? A similar issue has arisen in the Frauenkirche. Should they install a Baroque organ, the kind of light crisp, harpsichord-like instrument for which Bach and other Baroque composers wrote, an organ like the original installed when the church

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was completed in 1743, or a large, grumbling nineteenth-century organ like the one that was destroyed in the 1945 bombing?

Are they restoring the eighteenth-century splendor of Dresden's golden age or simply undoing the 1945 bombing? Are they trying to remember the eighteenth century or forget the twentieth century? Are there to be no traces left of World War II? Some want to tear down East German buildings too. What of history should be remembered?

Some marble doorways will show broken corners and some surviving towers will be preserved in their slightly damaged state, but postwar Dresden will be gone. In the next few years, the last of the burned-out and bomb-crumbled walls will be rebuilt. The new buildings of old Dresden are a patchwork of cream-colored new stone and black original stone. I could look at the black stones and imagine what the ruins had looked like. But architects say most of the blackening is a natural process, an oxidation of minerals in the sandstone. As this new century wears on, it will become increasingly difficult to see the difference between old and new stones and in time, this last trace of 1945 will have faded.

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DRESDEN HOPES to become one of those perfect European spots. You can go to the museum and see the Dürers and Holbeins and you can go to the opera and hear Weber and Wagner in a house where the composers debuted their work.

Ah, the wonder of Europe, if only history came for free. There is dry but fruity Saxon wine and game from the forest. I was there at Christmas time, which is a particularly picturesque moment to visit old Dresden. Wandering the old Christmas market, the oldest Christmas market in Germany, I examined the traditional blue folk pottery, the cut-out wood and paper, local lace, the famous Meissen porcelain, the china-faced dolls in elaborate lacy dresses and thick braids of golden hair. I ate the local sausage, kept warm on the steamy, strongly spiked *glühwein*, sampled the buttery yeast and dried fruit stollen for which Christmas in Dresden is famous. I listened to the old songs of simple, perfect music being sung to silly, merry German lyrics in clear theatrical voices in the children's theater on the square. If I craned my neck just right I saw the dark swirly steeples of the old rebuilt skyline, and now, with the twentieth century over, it could almost look like it never happened. Here there are no East Germans, no West Germans, no master race and no Jews. If only I would stop staring into elderly faces. If only I could forget what they did.

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GERT HEIDENREICH

Stranger In Your Homeland

IT WOULD BE EASIER to talk about the country I live in if I were able to say that the eastern part of Germany had been my view of *Heimat* (home) long before the Wall came down—opening up the prospect of an end to ideology and intolerance, the end of a parochial idyll.

But it is true that, like most of the citizens of the Federal Republic, I had grave doubts about unification and no particular yearning for it. It is also true that the West, where I grew up, was never really my *Heimat* either. For most of my life, being German has been a weird state of affairs.

So what do we mean today when we talk about closeness with the land and culture? Has not the concept of *Heimat* been perverted by our demagogic century, invalidated by global networking, to the point that it is devoid of meaning anyway? Nevertheless, we all carry within ourselves a memory of places where we were happy, places we were or are as familiar with as they seemed familiar with us—a certainty, a curious amalgamation of landscape, language, smells, and light, that alloy of childhood we call home. Where we lack such memory, we know at least how to describe the longing for it.

But what if the country never had the chance to offer the reliability people wanted—if *Heimat* itself is as uncertain as thin ice over dark depths and its very concept only useful as a definition of kitsch?

In my memory, our living space unfolds like a mute country. The foolish hope that the children wouldn't understand: we learned from fragments of sentences that *the Jews*—the adults used to utter the words strangely, casually, in a low voice, as if they tasted putrid—that *the Jews* had disappeared in dark times, apparently without anybody being responsible.

Then, hesitantly, our fathers returned. Wordless. Heroes looked brighter than they did, that much I knew, villains looked grimmer. But

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Editor's Note: "Stranger in Your Homeland" was originally presented as a lecture on March 21, 1999 in the Deutsches Nationaltheater in Weimar as part of the "Reden über Deutschland und Europa" series.

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they obviously did come from a place where unspeakable dangers seemed to lurk. The country bound to be my home belonged to Goethe's Erlking.

Was this supposed to become my *Heimat*?

I knew many fairy tales; I was familiar with evil. The visible disaster—the stumps of the houses in the cities, the defiant silence leaping towards my generation—all this made us inquisitive and, in the end, rebellious. We didn't grow up with the hopes of becoming bright new democrats; we grew up, after all, in an exhausted, reluctantly re-educated, traumatized society. Those who were clearing away the rubble on the streets could hardly find the courage to look inside themselves at the devastation of morality and of the human spirit. Maybe the exhaustion was overwhelming. But while strength was slowly restored, courage remained lost.

Today, we learn about the present by way of the past. Now we can understand how it may have been when the first SA hordes, Hitler's *Sturmabteilung*, rampaged through the streets, hunting down what had been declared fair game. Now, statistically speaking, any foreigner in Germany is at greater risk of being beaten, burned, or hunted to death than any German anywhere in this not exactly squeamish world.

Can *Heimat* withstand this?

Among the most significant and depressing experiences which I have lived through are these that make me distrust my country: this distrust could well be said to characterize my generation.

We were not guilty, but we had to bear the guilt. Who burdened us with it? Or did it just recoil from the grim expressions of our elders and find itself placed on our shoulders instead?

In contrast to what has often been maintained, I recall that we did learn about the Nazi period at school; even if some teachers carried their personal memories of the war into the classroom.

I remember that when I was thirteen I had to write a term paper in geography—which was then still called *Heimatkunde*—a paper on the regions which were simply called the German Eastern Territories (*Deutsche Ostgebiete*). From start to finish, my report was a revanchist pamphlet against Poland, sprinkled with romanticism *à la* Eichendorff. The emphasis I put on the word *Heimat*, which appeared on every page, reveals I was trying to deal with a theme I did not really understand. It was the time of the Cold War, with its *Heimatfront* (homefront).

But I need to go further back; even before we played cowboys and Indians, among the ruins, before we first attempted to smoke with little sticks of dried-up knotgrass vines, which the passers-by who saw us called *Jew's rope*. The fear and hunger of my early childhood got lost in

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my memory, but not my first walk to school, the old man leaning on a pillow at his open window and shouting down the village street after me: *Nazi bastard! Nazi bastard!* I was not—but we did live in the same house as the wife of an SS man: once proud of the silver skull on his black cap, that man had changed into a less-boastful farmhand striving for anonymity.

Heimat, so I must have learned in those days, is not only the space to which you belong. You also have to belong to the people who share that space with you. Otherwise they'll dispute your right to that *Heimat*.

Over forty years later, I received a letter from the woman who once lived above us, harboring her SS husband. She complained strongly about the label *murderer elite* in a newspaper article I had written about the SS Junker School in Bad Tölz.

During the following months I received about thirty letters from men who had once counted themselves among this "elite." All of them graduates of the Junker School in Bad Tölz, they advised me not to let my children out of sight, to have my face changed, and made other clichéd threats. One detail set me thinking: this obviously orchestrated campaign was not at all anonymous. These men had all signed their names and given their addresses.

Such persistent continuance of the past in the present fed my distrust. Because the past was filled with such monstrous violence and barbarism, it is so difficult to provide a safe and nurturing home ground in the present. All the pretty lies, such as *the new starting point* (*Die Stunde Null*) and *the blessing of being born late* (*Die Gnade der späten Geburt*) cannot prevent the word *Auschwitz* from appearing like a tattoo beneath the word *Heimat*, turning home into a palimpsest.

Historical blamelessness is no defense. There's a task handed over by the victims, a duty unlimited in times and easy to hear. We can choose not to listen to it, but then we will be blind as well. It seems that *Heimat* can only be gained through hard work, or perhaps obstinacy.

Today, I think my generation's revolt—mystified as well as marginalized by calling it the revolt of '68—was not really a political undertaking, let alone an ideological one, but a romantic-patriotic new departure to attain *Heimat*.

Where did we come from? The Adenauer era of our childhood and youth owes its name to a great chancellor who was all the same not afraid of being contaminated by having Nazis in his own government and who knowingly misinformed the German parliament about the true conditions laid down for German reunification in the Soviet notes of 1952.

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No, we did not know that much. But young people like to judge the whole by a few details, and they aren't necessarily wrong. That young generation among whom I had grown up lived with the visible consequences of militaristic insanity, and then was confronted by new fears of war: Korea; Berlin, 1953; Hungary, 1956. We had stared at the television screen and watched Russian and American ships on a collision course off Cuba; we saw the slaughter in Vietnam.

The times were ripe for this youth to be on the offensive against the expectations of older people. At German universities *the dust of a thousand years* had to be shaken from the academic robes (*Unter den Talaren der Muff von Tausend Jahren*). Since the Nuremberg trials, we had learned how strongly the past was still there, particularly in the academic community. One of the most important results of the '68 revolt was a new, enlightened approach to German history. Enthusiastically we had taken it upon ourselves to make this, our country, intellectually habitable for the young.

The whole symbolism of the revolt indicates appropriation. And the Establishment obviously realized they had to defend their claims—be it against their own children. To tell the truth, the first time I really felt at home in Germany was when, surrounded by a deafening concert of hoots, I was seated among a crowd of young people in the middle of the Karlsplatz in Munich to protest against the proposed emergency legislation. Looking back, I think I have never been closer to a sense of *Heimat*, for the very asphalt then was carrying a message through the bottom of my trousers. The message was: *this country is yours, too.*

Everything has changed since then. Little is left of our idealism besides speculation; our dream of salvation has moved to the stock market scene. *Heimat*, home, has won a new name: *Standort* (location). But who wants to belong to a business location?

The experience following the unexpected unification of Germany has not increased the inclination to belong. The snooping and informing came as no surprise: that writers are no better than other people is no discovery. It was their bigotry that was flabbergasting. No one with the faintest idea of the *krummholz* of humanity, to use Immanuel Kant's metaphor, will point his finger at the twists and turns of a life story under dictatorship. But if the twisted one pretends to be upright and expects praise for holding on to his principles, one would prefer to awaken out of unification.

Heimat is a process in which, at one point or another, the decisive question is bound to pop up: how much trust can you grant your home?

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Immediately after receiving the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade, Martin Walser intimated in a television interview that he had a problem believing the facts reported about his country, when they were all so horrible: "I am protecting myself against a lasting fear." Where *Heimat* fails to be edible, Walser flattens the unbearable into "normality."

His mention of "the monumentalization of shame," related to the debate about the Berlin memorial, clearly reveals that he feels his *Heimat* threatened by the stigmatization of its capital. Walser shares this belief with Rudolf Augstein, the publisher of *Der Spiegel*, who wrote about the planned memorial for the murdered Jews: "One has a hunch that this monument of shame is directed against the capital and the new Germany which constitutes itself in Berlin."

Here, the protection of a *Heimat* that is normal from a history that is not, is being displayed in its pure form. Home as a castle, history as an attack. The German discussion about the Berlin memorial comes down to the question of how to build a commemorative monument that does not admonish but accommodates. *Let's make it smaller. . . .*But, wanting to symbolize the extreme atrocity by an aesthetically tolerable mediocrity is wretchedly mean. *Heimat* cannot withstand this.

While writing this essay, I kept asking myself if what I'm really dealing with is a kind of nineteenth-century yearning. Yet Schubert's *Lieder* cycle, *Winterreise*, has proved to be surprisingly topical: *a stranger when I entered, a stranger when I leave.*

No reason for self-pity, just for political and cultural work.

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PETER HANDKE

From *On a Dark Night I Left My Silent House*

At the time when this story takes place, Taxham was almost forgotten. Most residents of nearby Salzburg couldn't have told you where it was located. To many of them, even the name sounded foreign. Taxham? Birmingham? Nottingham? And in fact the first football club after the war was called "Taxham Forest," until it climbed out of the lowest category and received a new name, then, over the years, worked its way up in the standings and even became "FC Salzburg" (by now it may have backslid to an earlier original name). Although in the center of town people often saw buses with TAXHAM on their destination sign drive by, neither more full nor more empty than the rest of the buses, hardly a single townsperson had ever sat in one of them.

Unlike the old villages in Salzburg's orbit, Taxham, founded after the war, never became a tourist attraction. There was no cozy inn, nothing to see—not even anything off-putting. Despite having Klessheim Castle, the gambling casino, and the official reception mansion just beyond the meadows, Taxham—neither a section of town, nor a suburb, nor farmland—had been spared all visitors, from nearby or from any distant parts whatsoever—in contrast to all the other villages in the region.

No one came by, even briefly, let alone spent the night. For there was never a hotel in Taxham—again in contrast to Salzburg, both the town and the province—and its "tourist rooms" consisted of niches, refuges, hideaways of last resort, available when everywhere else the signs read "No Vacancy." Not even TAXHAM, the name that formed a ghostly trail of light on the front of the buses circling until late at night through the now darker, more silent center of Salzburg, seemed ever to have lured anyone out there. No matter whom you asked, including the most

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Editor's Note: Excerpted from *On a Dark Night I Left My Silent House* by Peter Handke, translated by Krishna Winston. Copyright © 1997 by Suhrkamp Verlag Frankfurt Am Main. To be published by Farrar, Straus and Giroux in November 2000. All rights reserved.

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open-minded and especially the most broad-minded, said, when questioned about Taxham, "No," or merely shrugged.

Perhaps the only strangers who went there more than once were my friend Andreas Loser, teacher of classical languages and self-nominated limnologist, and I. The first time I visited Taxham, I found myself on the main thoroughfare, called "Klessheim Avenue" (no trace of castle or avenue), and stopped in a little shack of a bar, where a man railed for hours about how he'd been itching to kill someone: "No help for it!" And it was Andreas Loser who, one winter evening in the almost empty restaurant at the Salzburg airport (in those days almost larger than the arrival hall), whispered to me, "Look, that's the pharmacist of Taxham sitting over there!"

Since then my friend Loser has gone who knows where. And I left Salzburg long ago. And at the time when this story takes place, the pharmacist of Taxham, with whom we got together quite often after that, hadn't been heard from in almost as long—whether that was like him or not.

SOMETHING THAT'S HAPPENING to all sorts of places these days was characteristic of Taxham from the beginning, namely being cut off or at least made hard to get to from the surrounding area and neighboring towns by all sorts of transportation lines—especially long-distance ones—impossible to cross on foot or by bicycle. In contrast to towns now, which get squeezed only little by little into such a spandrel world, isolated and hemmed in by the expressways proliferating on all sides, Taxham had come into being with such barriers already in place. Although it lay in a broad river valley and on the threshold of a city, it rather resembled a military camp, and in fact, its immediate vicinity, with the German border very near, actually had three military bases, one of them within the township itself. The rail line leading to Munich and beyond, one of Taxham's barriers, had been there far longer than the village, and the highway, too, had been built even before the Second World War, as the Reich autobahn (decades later the Reich eagle, carved, along with the date of construction, at the entrance to the tunnel-like underpass, still had the swastika clutched in its talons), and similarly the airport, built during the first Austrian republic, made it hard to reach the site of the future village.

Built into this transportation-corridor triangle, reachable almost only by circuitous, inconvenient routes and through underpasses, Taxham appeared as an enclave, and not only at first sight.

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An enclave of what? Belonging to what? It was primarily, and certainly more conspicuously than anywhere else around Salzburg, a colony of war refugees, expellees, emigrants. In any case, the pharmacist was such a person, a member of a family that had run a pharmaceuticals factory in the east, first under the Hapsburg monarchy, then in the Czechoslovak Republic, then under German occupation. More details, I said, I didn't want to know for this story of his, to which he responded, "That's fine! Leave it vague!"

And after the war, new arrivals like this hadn't merely settled in the spandrel between the long-distance train tracks, the highway, and the airfield, on what was left of farmland there, specifically the farm known as "Taxham"—long since gone—but had screened themselves off even more, barricaded themselves in.

TAXHAM WAS A forerunner by half a century, though on a much smaller scale, of many of the new housing developments known today as "new towns": hard to find your way in, and even harder, whether on foot or by car, to get out again. Almost all the routes that promise to lead you out then turn off and take you around the block or wend their way back past cottage gardens to your starting point. Or they simply dead-end at yet another impenetrable hedge, through which open land and whatever leads elsewhere can just barely be glimpsed, even if the street is named after Magellan or Porsche.

In fact, because of the adjacent airport, most of the streets (or rather access roads) of this bushy-hedged village of Taxham bear the names of pioneers of flight, like "Count Zeppelin," "Otto von Lilienthal," "Marcel Rebard"—presumably foisted on the immigrants after the war, without consultation; they themselves would probably have preferred "Gottscheer Strasse" or "Siebenbürger Strasse," but who knows? The only aeronautical street name that would have been really suitable, according to my friend Andreas Loser, was "Nungesser and Coli," after the two pilots who attempted the first trans-Atlantic flight and vanished soon after leaving the continent behind.

FROM ITS BEGINNING Taxham anticipated a contemporary phenomenon, so to speak: Just as today it's more and more common for people not to live where they work, it was already the rule fifty years ago for those with jobs in the spandrel- and hedge-colony to have their house or apartment somewhere else—not far from Taxham, but at least not in the village. The

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retailers and restaurant owners came only during the day, to run their businesses. Even one of the priests assigned to the settlement, a man I knew well, came there only to celebrate Mass, and actually lived in Salzburg, where he wandered around aimlessly (I've heard meanwhile that he gave up his post long ago).

THE PHARMACIST ALSO had his house outside of Taxham, near one of the farm villages close to the border-marking Saalach River, just before it flows into the Salzach, in the natural spandrel or "point" there.

Yet he was fond of the place where he worked. His life unfolded in the triangle between his house by the river embankment, the pharmacy, and the airport, where in the period when we first met—his story takes place during another time altogether—he regularly ate his evening meal, sometimes with his wife, sometimes with his mistress.

The pharmacy, founded by his much older brother, had been the first business after the war in the new or temporary settlement of Taxham, indeed the first public institution open to all—before the school, the two churches, even before any shops. Not even a bakery preceded it (initially bread could be purchased at the original farm). For quite a while the pharmacy was the only place providing "services to the public," the postwar new arrivals. According to my acquaintance, people at first made disparaging jokes about this medicine hut in the no-man's-land, but gradually it became the provisional community center.

Even decades later you could still feel some of this: Although by now every trace of agriculture had disappeared and the pharmacy no longer stood alone but was flanked by church towers and supermarkets, it still let you imagine—more than see—a center of town.

Yet this impression certainly didn't come from the building itself. From the outside it looked like a tobacco shop or newsstand. And inside it had neither the dark, cleverly laid out, almost museum-like elegance of many older pharmacies nor the light, bright variety—where am I? in a solarium? a perfumery? a beach stall?—of so many new or recent pharmacies. It was almost alarmingly devoid of color or decoration, with not a single item, whether medicine or toothpaste, specially displayed, and the entire stock kept at a distance behind rather massive and ungainly barriers and glass-fronted cabinets, as if the items weren't wares for sale but an arsenal off limits to the unauthorized, monitored by two or three white-clad guards. It didn't even have that special threshold at the entrance, which, according to Andreas Loser, was so characteristic of pharmacies almost the world over—here you had no

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sense of elevation, no stumbling block, but instead drawings, ornaments, and patterns, richer than at the entrances to houses and quite a few other pharmacies, and a hollow even deeper than in church doorways, you found yourself inside the medicine warehouse just like that, without crossing a threshold.

"The Eagle"—that was the name of Taxham's pharmacy, chosen by the founding brother, who'd long since moved west, to Murnau in Bavaria, and established himself, along with his daughters, sons, and grandchildren, in the "Red Boar Pharmacy." But given its appearance, somewhere between a newsstand and an electric-company utility building, a more appropriate name would have been "the Hare" or "the Hedgehog," as the current owner acknowledged, or, if he'd had his druthers, it would have been called "Tatra Pharmacy," after the land of his fathers.

Of course, the people of Taxham stopped in to see him before going to the doctor's, perhaps also hoping to spare themselves a visit. What's less well known is that as a rule they would ask for advice and help afterward as well. "More and more the doctors have become specialists. And sometimes I think I can see the big picture that they miss nowadays. And besides, with me the patients needn't fear a referral or an operation. And sometimes I can even really help them."

That could happen and did happen above all when he crossed off medications, instead of adding or substituting others—not all the prescriptions on the doctor's list, but one here and there. "My task is primarily selecting and eliminating. Making room, not on the shelves but in people's bodies. Making room and channeling currents. And of course, gentlemen, if you insist, I have everything in stock." At night the shop—barred, locked, barricaded—seemed like a bunker ("which you'd have to dynamite to get into").

And in fact there were quite a few people in the village whom he was able to help this way—"also because they let themselves be helped this way." And since his reputation didn't extend beyond the village—"Heaven forbid!"—it was clear at the same time that the pharmacist of Taxham was by no means a miracle healer.

The local residents were hardly out the door when they promptly forgot their gratitude, and therefore him as well. Unlike family doctors,

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businessmen, or football players, he wasn't a recognized figure on the streets and in the few pubs. No one talked about him, recommended him to others, sang his praises, or made fun of the pharmacist the way they do in the classic comedies. People who ran into him outdoors, outside his realm of competence, either ignored him—quite unintentionally—or failed to recognize him, even if just a few minutes earlier they'd gratefully shaken his hand across the "counter" inside.

Part of the reason was that whenever possible the pharmacist didn't go out in his white lab coat but rather in hat and suit, with a pocket square, and looked right past the pedestrians, of whom there weren't many in Taxham, keeping his eyes fixed on treetops, crops, and raindrops in the dust, and therefore, according to the childhood superstition, remaining invisible. And it must also be said that he, too, as soon as he left his bunker in the evening, never recognized any of the people outside as his customers, clientele, or patients—at most as Herr or Frau So-and-so. Unlike a doctor, who remained "the doctor" when he left his practice, the Taxham pharmacist ceased to be a pharmacist as soon as he locked up his shop.

Who or what was he then? One time I saw children running toward him. And although children usually run faster as they approach strangers, these children slowed down as they came near him and looked up at him, away from him, up at him.

AT THE TIME when this story takes place, it was summer. The meadows around the airport and around the hedged-in settlement beyond had already been hayed once, and by now the grass was high again, easy to mistake from a distance for the grain that was hardly grown in the region anymore; unlike the spring grass, it had almost no flowers, and depending on the wind, its green showed streaks of gray, or the other way around.

It was also the time of year with almost no fruit, the cherries having been harvested already or plundered by the birds, especially the ravens, and the apples being far from ripe, except for the nearly white-skinned early apples, though such trees were rarer than ever.

In Salzburg, to the east, the festival was already under way, but although even the most distant Alpine valleys, beyond the passes, tunnels, gorges, even borders, felt its reverberations, Taxham, right nearby, remained untouched, and only half of the advertising column out on the edge of the meadow and hedge had posters on it, like the rest of the

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year; the rounded surface toward the runway and the control tower was bare as usual.

The local soothsayer—you always seem to find one in such places—had predicted at the beginning of the year that the region to the south of Taxham would experience a summer earthquake, and in fact this had just occurred, near Kapstadt. And according to the soothsayer, before summer's end a war would break out to the west of T., a three-day war, but with never-ending consequences!

HE GOT UP EARLY, as usual, "with the first raven cries." His wife was still asleep, in the other part of the house. They lived together, yet had been separated for more than a decade, each in his or her own realm; they always knocked before entering, and even in the shared spaces—vestibule, cellar, garden—there were invisible and visible partitions, and where that wasn't possible, as in the kitchen, they occupied the space in shifts, as indeed they had experienced all of everyday life in shifted time ever since they'd broken up and in a sense gone their separate ways, so although it would have been natural earlier on for his wife to get up at the same time as he did, perhaps now she had to force herself to stay in bed? And force herself to stay in the house when he went out to the garden? And to go out to the garden when he stayed in the house? And to go away tomorrow on the solitary holiday she'd planned for herself, because he wanted to have the house and garden to himself all summer, as had been the case every year for a long time now?

"No," the pharmacist said. "We don't have any problems with each other. Only now is our life perfectly peaceful. The arrangement developed spontaneously, and we don't even notice it, or at most as a kind of harmony we never enjoyed before, which allows us to share things for a few minutes, in passing, to have something in common."

"Yes, in passing," his wife said. "In the wink of an eye. On the doorstep. Between window and lawn chair. Between treetop and cellar window."

"What, for instance?" I asked.

The answer, once from her, once from him: "Always in silence. — When we're both listening to what the neighbors are saying. — Or to people walking along the dike on the other side of the fence. — Especially when a child's crying somewhere. — When an ambulance siren wails. — When we're in our own rooms at night and see through the window the emergency flare flashing up in the mountains over on the other side of the

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border. — When in last spring's flooding the drowned cow floated down the river. — At the first snowfall. — Yes? Oh, well. I don't know."

• • •

THE SUN ROSE. Not a drop of dew in the garden after the warm, dry night. But a sparkle from the apple tree: a hardened lump of sap exuded by a twig there, with a first ray of light shining through it now, a tiny lamp. The swallows high in the air deep black, as if it were still dawn. Only when one of them briefly raised its wings straight up as it swooped was there a flash of light up there, too, the sun gleaming on its feathers; it was as if the bird were playing with the morning light.

He butted his head against one of the already fat apples hanging at eye level, as if it were a ball, but more gently; then he walked upstream on the dike and let the morning and mountain-water air buffet him. No one else was out and about, and, as they always did in summertime, the rock-strewn banks of the Saalach took up more space than the actual shore and water flow; they stretched, bright and bleak, seemingly all the way to the river's source in the distant limestone mountains.

The pharmacist thought of his dead. His son also came to mind. But he wasn't really dead, was he? No, he'd thrown him out. Or was that too strong an expression? Hadn't he simply given him up, lost sight of him, put him out of mind, forgotten him? "No, I threw him out," he said. "I threw my child out."

HE SWAM IN the river, which chilled him to the bone, first fighting the powerful current, then letting himself drift, almost exactly along the line in the river where the German border ran. The bushes along the banks rushed by incredibly fast, in a gallop. He dove so deep into the water that little pebbles being washed along the river bottom got swept into his ears, where for quite a while they jostled each other, scraping and rattling. He felt as if he could stay under water this way forever, without breathing, and as if from now on this would be his life.

Then the pharmacist almost forced himself to head for the bank, just before the steep drop-off farther down. An early plane was coming in for a landing, already low over the treetops, and in one of the windows he made out a child's face. That was how keen his eyesight was, and not only after his swim in the icy river. And maybe in that respect the name his brother had given the pharmacy in Taxham was justified.

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AT HOME HE showered, rinsing off the gray, chalky river water, and drank the coffee that had been brewing during his swim, Blue Mountain Coffee from Jamaica, the best coffee he could get in this area, as always. Not a sound from his wife's part of the house, while her suitcase was already standing down in the vestibule, with an airplane ticket resting on top, which he hadn't looked at. "Just as before each of her departures, I suddenly found myself picturing the strawberry slope," he said, "the spot she once told me meant summer to her when she was a child."

He'd traveled a great deal himself when he was younger, almost all over the world. By now nothing tempted him anymore, not a single place. Right here, in this very location, he felt every morning as if he were setting out, or had set out long ago, and today would put the next stage of the journey behind him. "I wanted to stay here, much longer, much longer."

Now on the dike, visible through the garden shrubbery only by the bright colors of their outfits, the first runners, in pairs, single file on the narrow path (but in Taxham, beyond the meadows, almost no one ran, even to catch the bus), talking too loudly, as if they thought their voices wouldn't carry otherwise.

And from one of the neighboring properties a child's shriek and then crying—heartrending—and then promptly the same from the house on the other side. He listened. And he was sure that his wife was also listening behind her door. They listened together, even when the crying and sobbing to left and right had died down and had long since given way to talking and calls back and forth, with voices that seemed clearer and more resonant after the earlier bawling. They also heard the train go by over on the German side. "Heading for Bad Reichenhall."—"Yes."

ON THIS PARTICULAR morning the pharmacist rode his wife's bicycle; she wouldn't be needing it for the next few weeks in any case. He took the road parallel to the river bank, then a stretch through the meadows along the river, then turned off and rode through the fields to the farm village of Siezenheim. The cemetery there had a piece of conglomerate with a crucified Christ—without the cross—scratched into the rock, the cross indicated only by Christ's posture—a hydrocephalic head on a Lilliputian body, the little arms spread wide, the grooves in the east-facing rock, usually hard to make out, weathered almost beyond recognition, appearing deeper and more distinct in the morning light.

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And then the pharmacist chose to continue in an easterly direction, riding into the sun: In that way he avoided having his shadow in front of him, a sight he'd always found upsetting. From the grass, as earlier from the river and then from the grooves in the stone, rose the smell of the last few weeks' drought (the stories you heard about Salzburg and all its rain were often wrong). As he reached the camouflage-spot-colored barracks of the Siezenheim army base, a city bus drove by, painted and decorated for the festival as if it, too, were part of these camouflage-colored facades; an airplane's shadow swooped over the ground like the blink of an eyelid.

As he turned off into the hedged-in settlement, or, as he secretly called it, the "Lost Island," someone said hello to him—a rarity here—then a few others, between Lindbergh Promenade and Lilienthal Avenue, the greeting followed each time by embarrassment—until finally the pharmacist realized that the greetings were directed toward the familiar clunky prewar bicycle, usually associated with his wife, the "lady pharmacist" (which, in fact, she was, as almost everyone in the family was a pharmacist, in both the older and the younger generations, with the exception of his son).

His two employees, an older woman and a young man, still almost a child—the woman was his mother, for here, too, pharmacy work was a family tradition—were already waiting on the grassy plot at the center of the village, lounging, overpunctual as always, outside the barred entrance to the bunker, with a good-weather cloud high overhead. They'd come from the south years ago, fleeing the civil war, and had brought with them a curse commonly hurled at enemies there: "May your only inn become the pharmacy!"

The pharmacist also had a daughter, who'd been working with him lately, since completing her studies, but for the summer she'd left the Lost Island for another, together with her boyfriend, he, too, a pharmacist, but also—a novelty in the family!—a physicist.

At her departure he'd had the impression that she was reluctant to go and for the first time, curiously, was worried about him. Yet it seemed—as it always had, incidentally—that precisely her absence, or the absence of all those close to him, protected him, or so he thought at least, just as this absence also compelled him to do everything, or to live in such a way, that the other person could stay away for as long as originally

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intended, and calmly, free of worry, fully savoring the trip, the island paradise, and—why not?—happiness.

The absences of his family members—"a pharmacist doesn't have friends, or at least I can't picture having any," he said—also gave him an existential jolt every time. "If I could formulate a moral or lifelong imperative for myself," he said, "it would be this: Comport yourself in such a way that the relatives who happen to be absent at any given moment—relatives in the broadest sense—can always stay far away without you, in a good state of mind, unperturbed!"

THE PHARMACIST even had a specialty. He was an expert—to the extent it's even possible with such an infinitely varied subject—on mushrooms.

Many pharmacies, at least European ones, post charts in the window at the beginning of summer, with pictures of the edible and especially the poisonous varieties, sometimes even set up three-dimensional models, carefully arranged in real moss. But when an inexperienced gatherer comes in from the woods and fields with the real mushroom he's found and asks for information, most pharmacists just shake their heads without a word, or perhaps tap the earthy things lightly from a distance—please, no sand on the glass counter—and almost invariably issue unfavorable oracular judgments: poisonous, or at least highly suspicious.

But the Taxham pharmacist knew at a glance, or at first touch, or at the latest from sniffing or nibbling, what people had brought him (he could identify several almost indistinguishable varieties by the different worms, snails, earwigs, or spiders on or inside them). And above all, he showed enthusiasm for every mushroom placed before him, even when just a few gills of one, stuck to a child's hand and then thoughtlessly popped in the mouth, could do very bad things, even when the mushroom in question stank and oozed in all directions like a three-week-old carcass.

"I often wonder whether it wasn't my passion for mushrooms that drove my wife and me apart," he said. "Especially in the fall, when I came home in the evening, all my coat and suit pockets would be stuffed with them, and then the refrigerator, too, and the pantry, and even the cellar, where mushrooms keep best, with their aroma. Day after day she had to eat my mushrooms—there are far more edible kinds than people think—and well into the winter. Of course, after a while I stopped bringing them into the house, but then I hid them from her in the garden—how could I throw away mushrooms, these splendid gifts of nature?—and out there they glowed and gave off their unmistakable

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smell from under the shrubs and from holes in trees, the worst smell of all, like a dog's cadaver, being that of the stinking morel, which, when it's young, no bigger than a pigeon's egg, is a delicacy not described anywhere as yet, for instance cut up raw and served with salt and olive oil."

Thus the second thing the pharmacist pursued in his laboratory, or rather his kitchen, was his mushroom studies, where he was sometimes the self-assured chef, sometimes the diffident apprentice, slow on the uptake; yes, he was even preparing a very special mushroom guide, in which he planned first to highlight the virtues of some generally despised varieties and then explore the effect of certain mushrooms on the eater—but he wasn't concerned with the psychoactive species, the so-called consciousness-expanding ones, so much as with the "dream mushrooms," the "dream-expanding" ones.

Yet at the beginning of the time when his story takes place, the area around Taxham, and not that area alone, was suffering from a major drought. There were no mushrooms far and wide, and since the pharmacist needed actual samples for his project, especially for describing their smell, on this particular morning he didn't get far with his mushroom fantasies; at most he could cross out observations in his notes that he intended to omit or skip.

From the counter running the length of the wall with the large plate-glass window, he could see the parched lawn in back of the building, onto which a blackbird trotted again and again—only blackbirds could pop so unexpectedly into nowhere—with a black, shiny, seemingly eyeless bead, a knight in search of single combat, his visor already closed. The hedge from which the bird always burst forth formed the beginning of a series of staggered hedges extending all the way to the high hedge on the horizon marking the end of the village, where, as the pharmacist could clearly see, only one leaf was stirring, but that all afternoon, a furious flickering and fluttering, standing for an entire tree and, in time, for an entire forest.

In between he could be found in the front room helping out, even if only bringing a glass of water.

At noon the pharmacist went out for a snack, as was his habit, to the wooded area between Taxham and the Salzburg airport. Habit? It was more a matter of certain rituals or self-imposed rules that he observed strenuously, even though he sometimes had to force himself.

A stranger coming through these woods would have perceived them as shady, in every sense of the word. Even for the local residents, they weren't a destination. At most they drove by fenced portions of it on a road that was oddly winding for this plain. The fencing was unusual for

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woods anywhere in this country, and was interrupted by short wood roads that apparently soon came to a dead end in the underbrush. They had deep tire tracks, and were littered with trash, apparently not only from vehicles on the ground but also from the hundreds of small aircraft passing overhead every day; even the trees had scraps of paper and plastic caught in them, all the way up to their crowns.

But the pharmacist knew a second forest within this forest. This copse was surrounded by a ditch and a girdle of brambles, with a breach in one spot where he could enter by way of a plank, without even having to duck. After the semidarkness outside, it was light in here, as if in a clearing, yet many things were growing here, providing shade, but each tree or bush clearly at a distance from the next, off by itself—and thus the shadows were also separate—and as a rule only one of each variety—one raspberry bush, one birch, one pine, and so on, in a circle, but all random, without order, which precluded the impression of being in a tree or plant nursery. Also there were things growing here that were very unusual for the area and wouldn't have been considered possible, such as a Spanish chestnut, a Serbian spruce (a survival from the Ice Age, thin as a rod but towering above the others), a mulberry tree, a sycamore.

When he sat down with his old, cracked briefcase under the beech—it, too, a unique exemplar—the tree with the broadest shade there, he saw that he wasn't alone for a change. A few shadows over, a group of woodsmen lay stretched out on the ground, taking their midday break, with their tools—saws and ladders—next to them. They'd set fire to a big pile of roots they'd dug out, and the fire was burning brightly, without smoke, another unique feature among the others. The pharmacist ate like them: the sandwiches he'd brought along in his briefcase—theirs were very similar—and, for dessert, an apple (from the Taxham supermarket).

"Pharmacist?" The smell of medicine, which, whether he wanted it or not, clung to him in his workplace and for a while after he left it—at any rate his car was always filled with it, and he sometimes avoided the car for that very reason—had dissipated long since, on the way. And his clothing was so inconspicuous that in cut and color, at least there and at this moment, it was hardly distinguishable from that of the woodsmen. And besides, he was barefoot like them, had already taken off his shoes coming in: Noon was the time of day when he felt a great weakness inside him, and not from hunger, so it helped him to have the ground directly underfoot, especially in these woods where for a few steps the path was soft with recently fallen piles of chestnut blossom-strings, but then for instance offered a stretch with nothing but the hard

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ridges of protruding roots, and finally ended here in a veritable field of angular, sharp beechnuts, a massage from his feet to the ends of his hair.

They all ate their midday meal in complete silence, and remained silent for a good while afterward. If they looked in the same direction, each did so independently of the others. The man from the beech drank from the clearing's hidden spring under the sycamore in such a way that the others could watch him, then went back to his place, while the workmen had already resumed their cutting and sawing, and read, as he usually did in summertime, one of the medieval epic tales of knights and magic.

"Weren't those epics actually meant for wintertime—telling of blossom freshness and bathing in the lake, while the castles were snowed in and isolated?"

"But in the summery landscapes they describe I can also recognize the current summer world, the world of today; it appears more distinctly before my eyes, and as something that by now has become a fact, no longer merely a magic and fairy-tale trick."

"For example?"

"See above, see below. Or you fight your way for hours through the underbrush, and suddenly a door opens automatically in front of you, and someone takes your bag from you in an air-conditioned hall and escorts you to the next adventure."

"A so-called adventure?"

"No, a real one. In that plantation, the forest-within-the-forest, one early afternoon, while I was reading, and especially in the intervals of closing my eyes, whole subterranean hosts were seated there, gray on gray, but poised for action, ready to show their true colors, and they were sitting in their saddles not over there, under the transparent mountain, the Untersberg, with Charlemagne, but here beneath the summery plain."

IN THE CENTER of Salzburg the pharmacist moved around as if wearing a cap of invisibility. During all those years I saw him face to face only twice. Although he told me he wasn't close to anyone in town, I did catch him there, though each time by means of a singular visual detour.

One time I was walking along a little-used path on the Mönchberg when I saw the Spanish prime minister coming toward me, casually dressed, accompanied by a broad-shouldered man in dark clothing, wearing sunglasses—his bodyguard, no doubt—whom I recognized only after we had passed each other as the pharmacist of Taxham.

And likewise another time, as I was crossing the Staatsbrücke, I saw, on a balcony of the "Österreichischer Hof," an American movie actress

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famous at the time (she later drowned in the Pacific), who was giving a small, almost shy wave to someone below—certainly not me? No, for as I looked around, I saw an elegant foreigner—a rarity in this town—but dusty and ravaged like a second Richard Widmark, waving to her the same way—it couldn't be the pharmacist from the outskirts, could it?—yes, it was him, and gone already, as was the beauty from her hotel balcony.

THE MONTHLY MEETING with the other members of his guild was summery and short: Several pharmacies were closed for the holidays, and most of the new drugs weren't scheduled for release until fall; for now, at least in this area, the old stand-bys were sufficient, though because of the tourists larger supplies had to be laid in; this didn't affect the Taxham pharmacist.

The three of them then lingered on a terrace above the Salzach, where a faint breeze off the river fanned the heat away—the pharmacist from Itzling, the pharmacist from Liefering, and him. The pharmacist from Itzling was a young woman, to whom the Taxham pharmacist had once remarked, in the middle of another conversation about medications, quite absent-mindedly and unintentionally, "You're really very beautiful."

He told me later that there was also a story to tell about this woman, at least as adventurous and mysterious as his own, and certainly more erotic—she would make a good main character for a book. Why me, anyway? Why not her?—I responded by asking whether he could picture a heroine called "the woman pharmacist of Itzling." And altogether, he should just wait and see.

That afternoon, which I view as the beginning of his story, he again became lost in thought, with the two others there, and abruptly said to the beautiful pharmacist, "Why are you so brown? Among the ancient Egyptians only the men were brown; the women had to be white as alabaster or cheese. And why do almost all pharmacists nowadays go around with these permanent tans, and especially the women?"

"But you're tanned yourself, actually as dark as a *fellah*."

"That's my natural state, and it also comes from being out in the sun and shade and moving around, not like the rest of you from lying and applying lotion in the South-West Tanning Salon, where the rays are carefully calibrated to the white of your lab coats."

"Why are you being so mean today? There was a time when you wanted to erect a pyramid in my honor!"

All this time the ancient, almost deaf pharmacist from the outlying village of Liefering was expounding, in a voice that boomed across the

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river, his theory of the signs of the Zodiac, according to which these signs governed not only people but also regions and entire countries. The fate of nations depended on the stars that ruled them. The history of mankind, of the peoples' relationships with each other and individually, was determined by Leo, Scorpio, Gemini, or Taurus. Thus a United States of Europe was inconceivable simply because every European country had a different sign, all of them equally powerful; no country could claim an advantage. Even in Germany all the provinces had different constellations, incompatible with each other, for which reason the fear of this largest country, now acute again, was absolutely unfounded. On the other hand, one constellation ruled all of North America, and that was why the United States had come into being there, and, of course, stayed together, under the sign of Aries? Virgo? Capricorn?

"Nonsense!" the pharmacist of Taxham interrupted him suddenly, after looking back and forth between the young woman and the river for a while, lost in thought again. "Typical pharmacist's superstition! It doesn't come from up there, up in space, but from down here, from beneath the ground. And from down here we, or the countries and nations, if you will, aren't directed and constrained at all, but prodded, spurred on, set in motion.

"Where down here?"—the young woman asked this, while the old man next to her went on spinning his stars-and-states theory at the top of his voice, without listening—"In the magma?"

But the man from Taxham had gone under again, had closed his eyes and even seemed to have stopped breathing. And he didn't move a muscle when the woman abruptly grabbed him by the chin and said, "Typical pharmacist's superstition!"

The pharmacist from Liefering was just remarking, "That business in Yugoslavia had to end badly: above every country there, a star that was incompatible from the outset with the others and at war with its neighboring star."

HE TOOK THE BUS back to Taxham and worked there in the back room until after sundown—which was late in July—with the doors long since locked. Sometimes it seemed that time could be grasped in an image: now, for instance, in the image of a curve, in which he felt comfortably cradled as he worked silently away.

First the shop out in front was being cleaned, and then from one minute to the next a silence fell, in which, although the sun was already gone, colors predominated, then blossomed. Something had been

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pushed aside, an obstacle, a screen, a minimizing glass, and a different map of the world came into view; on another scale, not intended for entering, and certainly not for consuming or putting in your pocket, but perhaps for a certain kind of measurement-taking—even though, as the silence persisted, it had promptly faded and shriveled up. He spread his fingers and let the air blow between them.

He pushed himself away from the counter, several times. Through the open window, through the bars protecting the little building, came the smell of the settlement's dusty streets, just sprinkled, which gave him a whiff of the soaking rain they hadn't had in so long, and at the same time, swooshing in unexpectedly from beyond the last ring of hedge, a good Taxham mile away, the smell of the circus, although it had moved on way back at the beginning of summer.

If the pharmacist was known at all in the area—for instance by Andreas Loser and me—it was for his sense of smell. In Loser's case it was hearing and listening that counted, or, in his words, "moved his thoughts along," and in my case it was primarily seeing and contemplating; but with our distant acquaintance it was simply smelling—not any special sniffing, but just having something in his nose, without any special effort, hundreds of things at a time, without confusion, clearly distinguished. (And obviously the peculiarities of one couldn't always be separated from those of the other.) Just as some people could see a thing and keep its image on their retina for months afterward—they had only to close their eyes—time and again the pharmacist would have a smell from long ago in his nostrils, still fresh and even stronger than originally, a smell perhaps snapped up only in passing and long since subject to the statute of limitations, as it were. And just as those other people first perceived objects with real clarity and vividness in those residual images, so it was for the pharmacist with his residual smells.

So along with the wafted-away circus, a leopard or perhaps only a miniature ape promptly leaps out of the nearest bush. And the pharmacist, lost in thought again, climbed onto his lab counter, rolled up his sleeves, and teetered on tiptoe. Amazing the way shifting your perspective a bit from the familiar could sometimes shift the gaps, give things a different twist, rearrange the entire state of affairs. "Wasn't that also uncanny at times?"

"Nothing was ever uncanny to me," the pharmacist responded, long after the time when his story takes place: "At least not until that time."

From up there on the counter it could be seen that all the buildings in the settlement, forming, in that brightness without sunshine, a closed, wide-curving kraal, offered a perspective very different from the small

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pharmacy building at the kraal's center. Their orientation was completely at odds with the pharmacy's, even though it had been the first, the original structure in the village; they were set on an axis noticeably opposed to the pharmacy's, as if to show disdain for the little structure in the middle, or as if it didn't exist at all.

And then, in driving away, if you looked over your shoulder, the squat cube there on the remnant of steppe seemed to be turning its back on the surrounding area, not even belonging to the soil around it, a sort of random boulder. No child awake at this hour. Not a bird in the sky. Yet there was a cloud overhead, a large, grayish-white cumulus cloud, its upper edge crumpled in many places, drifting slowly eastward, as if on pilgrimage; as if it were pilgrimaging. It might also have been moving westward, and it might also have been morning.

THE PHARMACIST HAD the habit of taking his evening meal at a restaurant, and still out toward the airport. Except that his new eating place was located outside all the concourses, constantly being added or expanded, also past the parking lots and even past a field of vegetables. The building had grown out of a root cellar, or been built onto it, and the small, low-ceilinged dining room was half underground, so to speak, as if from time immemorial. How nice to go down the few steps from the hardly traveled road, which still suggested the wagon road it had once been, especially nice now, with the light fading, when you could look back up the stairs and see nothing, nothing at all.

Unlike previously, the pharmacist now sat down alone to his evening meal, had already been alone for a long time, without a mistress, and his wife had joined him here only a few times in the beginning, until those fat-bellied mushrooms that turned blue as you sliced into them, then shaded into olive green, those mushrooms he'd collected and brought so the chef could prepare them, took on for her, when she was forced to eat them, "the taste of human flesh."

Outside, when he raised his head, dusk was falling over the fields, and the last plane was landing; there were no night flights.

The one other table that was usually occupied stood in the opposite corner, but because the place remained fairly quiet, in spite of the open door, the conversation there, between a couple and a man who turned out to be a priest in mufti, could be easily overheard, even though none of them were raising their voices. The couple's only child had run away and disappeared, years before. And in the course of the evening it came out that they had in fact thrown the child out, locked him out, then

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locked him out again, and finally put his satchel outside the door, no, a plastic bag, had rolled down the shutters and gone away on a trip, so as not to have to see what happened. And now their relationship was on the rocks, too. The woman: "I wish I were dead." The man: "Me, too."

The priest argued that dying was perhaps a kind of salto mortale, after which a person landed on his feet again, entirely different feet; but he got all muddled, began to stammer, fell silent; and then all three of them sat there in silence; the couple wept.

The Taxham pharmacist seemed invisible, and when he asked for the bill, he had to wave his arm several times. And when he said good-bye, he did so in a language that the proprietor took for Spanish. Spanish? He couldn't understand himself what he'd just said. It had been no language at all.

AS HE PEDALED HOME across the river valley on his wife's bicycle, which was quite high, by the meadows, now pitch dark, he encountered a strong smell of sweat, which turned out, as he rounded the bend, to come from a squad of soldiers on a night march.

One of the families next door to him on the lane along the dike was still sitting out on the verandah, and he chatted with them for as long as it took him to open the garden gate (but the gate was unlocked, as was always the case when his wife left the house); over the others' hedge, their heads could hardly be made out. In one of his skylights—was that a light shining? no, the reflection of a street lamp far off. And something like a spiderweb attached itself to his face as he made his way to the door and also indoors in the vestibule, as if he'd been gone much longer than just for the day.

He switched the television on for just a second, during which a man on the screen opened his mouth wide—and switched it off before he could say a word.

As usual when he had the run of the entire house and was no longer restricted to his own living quarters, he didn't know where to go; he had trouble finding his place. So long since he'd been in his wife's rooms—since the last time she went away for a while. And now he wandered back and forth there in the dim light—every other lightbulb was burned out—and then noticed that he was instinctively looking for a message or a sign intended for him. But there wasn't even a trace of their shared past, unless he counted, half hidden, a tiny picture of their son, taken in a photo booth and pasted into a panoramic landscape, barely visible in the crown of a tree, with his head pointing down, no less, like a rebus.

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And how precariously she had positioned all her things, big and small, not only in her bathroom, but also in her part of the kitchen: the seemingly rigid order she'd left behind could be thrown into complete confusion if some little object were dislodged in passing. Either something was hanging by a single thread, or it was perched on a ledge, usually high up, or this group of crystal balls was poised, in what looked at first like a miracle, on a slanting surface—but not another step!—or, like this open salt dish, it would tip at the slightest push, despite the apparently level surface under it, because one of its feet was broken, or, like this bundle of pencils, would break without the slightest pressure, because the points were so sharp. And what if this happened to be the very sign he was looking for?

Back in his own part of the house, he turned his bed pillow over; nothing. Strange contrast between the two pillows: one quite creased, the other one, next to it, completely untouched and smooth, the ironing folds just as they had been for years, as if in a glass case, a bed in a castle, unoccupied yet comfortable, waiting for someone to return.

HIS DAUGHTER HAD phoned from the island where she was on holiday; she planned to stay a while longer; and then his wife, too: She had arrived safely, though she didn't say where.

He played a game of chess with himself, letting "the other person" win. Through the open casements the fast-flowing river could be heard, invisible behind the dike, along with the chirping of crickets, actually more a delicate nonstop trilling from the dike, the underbrush, holes in the ground—that most summery of sounds. A veil shrouded the moon.

"What do you want?" one of the players said to the other. "Is there anything at all you still want?" "Yes, I want the continuation. I'm quite eager to see what happens next."

"With what? With whom?"

"With me. With us. With my story. With our story. But we're going to have to do our part. And by that I don't necessarily mean deep-sea diving or scaling the Himalayas."

"And how do you picture such a continuation, for instance?"

"Well, someone might jump in now through the open window and ask for help. Or hold a knife to my throat. Or tomorrow morning I might find a snakeskin next to me in the bed. No, it would have to be more than just a skin, and something more terrible than just a snake."

"And why does your voice sound so choked up?"

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"My daughter just asked me the same thing, even my wife. My voice sounded as if it were coming from a deep well, one of them said, from down a manhole, said the other."

On this day the last thing the pharmacist did was practice throwing: the chess pieces into their box, which he moved a bit farther away for each toss.

Perhaps it was his dried mushrooms, of which he bit off some pieces, perhaps not: At any rate, that night he had two dreams that took place without him, beyond his person. In one of them, adjacent to the small cellar in his house were suites of underground rooms, one grand hall leading to the other, all sumptuously decorated, festively lit, yet all of them empty, as if in expectation, awaiting a splendid, perhaps also terrible event, and not just recently, but since time immemorial.

In the second dream, the hedge barriers to the neighboring properties were suddenly gone, removed by force or simply fallen away, and people could see into each other's gardens and onto each other's terraces, and not merely onto them, but also into every corner of their houses, now suddenly laid bare, and likewise one neighbor could see the other, which in the first moments caused immense mutual embarrassment and shame, but then gradually gave way to a kind of relief, almost pleasure. (It should also be noted that all these hedgeless houses appeared as pole or moor dwellings, each one with a boat tied up down below.)

But after that came, quite unexpectedly—was it still a dream? a blackness, and then there was nothing but this blackness, no action, no film, just the end of the film, the end, quite simply, of any kind of "I am," "you are," "he is," "they are," "you people are," a blackness that filled every inch of space so completely that it jolted the pharmacist out of his sleep; yet it didn't dissipate at that point; it remained.

"I'd actually forgotten," he said, "that a few days earlier I'd had a small black growth on my skin removed, and the lab results were due soon."

Had he slept all night on his back this way, with his legs crossed? Now and then, through the wide-open window, the seemingly tipped-over waning moon had appeared for just a moment, in a rapidly swelling wall of cloud, with its face pointing down.

Translated by Krishna Winston

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GEORGE BRADLEY

At the Other End of the Telescope

the people are very small and shrink,
dwarves on the way to netsuke hell
bound for a flea circus in full
retreat toward sub-atomic particles—
difficult to keep in focus, the figures
at that end are nearly indistinguishable,
generals at the heads of minute armies
differing little from fishwives,
emperors the same as eskimos
huddled under improvisations of snow—
eskimos, though, now have the advantage,
for it seems to be freezing there, a climate
which might explain the population's
outré dress, their period costumes
of felt and silk and eiderdown,
their fur concoctions stuffed with straw
held in place with flexible strips of bark,
and all to no avail, the midgets forever
stamping their match-stick feet,
blowing on the numb flagella of their fingers—
but wait, bring a light, clean the lens . . .
can it be those shivering arms are waving,
are trying to attract attention, hailing you?
seen from the other end of the telescope,
your eye must appear enormous,
must fill the sky like a sun,
and as you occupy their tiny heads
naturally they wish to communicate,
to tell you of their diminishing perspective—
yes, look again, their hands are cupped
around the pinholes of their mouths,
their faces are swollen, red with effort;
why, they're screaming fit to burst,
though what they say is anybody's guess,

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it is next to impossible to hear them,
and most of them speak languages
for which no Rosetta stone can be found—
  but listen harder, use your imagination . . .
the people at the other end of the telescope,
are they trying to tell you their names?
yes, surely that must be it, their names
and those of those they love, and possibly
something else, some of them . . . listen . . .
the largest are struggling to explain
what befell them, how it happened
that they woke one morning as if adrift,
their moorings cut in the night,
and were swept out over the horizon,
borne on an ebbing tide and soon
to be discernible only as distance,
collapsed into mirage, made to become
legendary creatures now off every map.

MARINA TSVETAEVA

554

Longing for the motherland!
A mystery I demystified long ago!
It is totally the same to me—
where I am—totally alone.

Along which stones I drag myself,
with my shopping bag, home.
A house unaware of who I am,
like some hospital or barrack.

It's all the same whom I defy
as I bristle like a caged lion,
from which coterie of men
I'm expelled—without fail—

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back to myself, my own identity.
A polar bear with no floe.
Where not to strive at companionship (I don't try),
where to lose self-respect—makes no difference.

Neither am I lured by my native
tongue, its nursing call.
I do not care if I'm greeted
or greet with unintelligible words!

(That reader gorging himself with tons
of papers, news-scandalmonger)
he is a man of this age,
as for me—I stand pre-every age.

Stunned, like a tree stump
bereft of the alley it stood on.
People—I don't care about, things—I don't care,
and maybe even less care

about whatever came with my birth:
peculiarities, traits, features,
data—all wiped out as if by a hand:
my soul being born—somewhere.

My land won't preserve me.
So that even the keenest detective
searching far and wide through my soul
will not find a birthmark!

Each house is alien to me, each shrine empty,
all things—all the same, all things—make no difference.
But if along the road a bush
stands, especially a rowan. . .

Translated from the Russian by Vittoria Bradshaw

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SÁNDOR KÁNYÁDI

Space-Crossing Gate

when the news got around in
ever increasing circles
that infinity has no borders
that a world can be imagined
without axioms and postulates
parading as fundamental truths
that through a point several straight lines
can be drawn parallel
to the straight lines drawn around the point
in an imaginary circle
and that circle of imagination
can increase in size to infinite
proportions without borders
they decided for the sake of public safety
to close off infinite space
with a plain pine-beam
crossing gate

Translated from the Hungarian by Paul Sohar

GÉZA SZŐCS

Osip Mandelstam's Letter from the Labor Camp

My country is about a hundred
feet wide. My wife lives overseas. Down
the feverish bronchia of the well
a pail is aflame, and foxfire flees.

Patience weaves a scarf around my neck,
chokes my throat, it's quite a tease.

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A thousand dentures and postal cunning
conspire against me, so please, tell,
where is my wife? worries the man,
where are my boots, my horse, my rhapsodies?

He stands around in a rough hemp shirt,
it's a pit of forget-me-nots he sees, but
the raspberry growing on his chest
does not attract the trackless bees.

Translated from the Hungarian by Paul Sohar

DICK BARNES

Geneva, 1916

A glance along the table,
light words, heady laughter,
the possibly deliberate
pressure of an ankle,

a possible innuendo
in clever things she said:
one thing led to another,
and she led him to her bed.

It seemed to him a conquest
though she were oh so willing;
but after a night with her
he woke up in the morning

to find that she had done it
as a favor to his father.
She, his father's mistress.
He felt "unstable as water,"

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like Reuben in the Bible.
An atavistic sheen
undid the sexual debut
of this son from the Argentine

but gave him, as a poet,
a thought to write about:
whether all our deeds are darkened
by the shadow of a doubt;

who is, in any action,
the actor, who the author?
If you do what another has done,
are you the same, or the other?

ADAM KIRSCH

Heroes Have the Whole Earth for Their Tomb

Tonight I read of an ancient war
Once thought self-evidently great,
Out-blazoning all that came before,
Each battlefield a hinge of fate,

And marvel once more at how the gain
Or loss of some extinguished city
Could cause defeated men such pain
And win for the conqueror such glory.

Who wondered then if Amphipolis
Merited agonizing death,
Or doubted that mighty Brasidas
Would, for as long as men drew breath,

Shine forth in his dear-bought renown?
And when did the majesty of act
Imperceptibly dwindle down
To indifferent, objective fact?

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Athens and Sparta gripped each other
For thirty years; all those who died
Piled in a single trench together
Could not for an hour have pacified

Insatiable Passchendaele; the dead
Rise in an exponential series
From units in the Megarid
Up to the hundred thousand bodies

Now nourishing the green Ardennes.
If trophies were to be built for all,
The urns would leave no room for men,
The names would require an endless wall.

History that the Greeks released,
Unconscious of evil, from the lamp,
Now finds its scale so far increased
That atom-bomb and murder-camp

Draw less profusion from the heart
Than a few soldiers killed at sea
When Pericles, in the crowded mart,
Read out his invented eulogy.

DAVID WAGONER

Making a God

His god let people die and had not stayed
Under his fingers in the night
Or in the morning, under the sun
In the afternoon or by the fire at evening,
So he made his god out of clay
And kept it with him. Though he painted it

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The colors of sea and sky
And dressed it in cowrie shells and feathers
From the sea and sky, it melted
In the rain and cracked in the sun, and he lost it
Somewhere among palm trees. So he carved his god
Again out of hard wood,
A seated god still light enough
To carry through the long day and by firelight
And into sleep till sunrise
Without melting. Though he put flowers
On each side of its head, his god could hear
Nothing with them and let the people die,
Let his mother and father die and his wife die
And his children sicken and die,
So he made another god out of stone
With shut eyes weeping, whose tears
As they fell were slowly changing
Into stone people, being born
While falling and laughing and lying
Around its feet, and his god was lifting them up
In both of its stone hands and eating them.

DON BOGEN

Give It Back

Give it back—I made it all up
That alcove where surplus glowed under dust
Unfinished, an attic space with nails poking down
Khaki of sheet metal, orange flickering in tubes
Ephemeral as the smells, which were plywood, solder and Kents
Color words, smell words—I put them in a book
Everything there is still missing
Two lies of remembrance: it was always winter
Things could speak

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Could Not Speak

Could not speak but only arrange
Made tiles in a tile factory, painted on them
Nine different scenes: trees on cliffs, vineyards, estates
Permanent, unreachable under the glaze
Could not speak but worked at a table with others
Signed the clients' names
Breathed clay, clay wash on my fingernails

In fall made crèche figures, painted them
Simplified folds of the swaddling
Two dots for eyes, lips one red stroke
God after God after God
Could not speak but arranged them in lines
Cut off the excess, smashed the defective
Mixed paint, fed the oven, baked and made them

Flat scenes, little men, little animals
In lines as if they were an army marching
Sold at the fair: cut off and wrapped up
Hung on walls or set out at holidays
Stiff, bone-light, caught in sheen
Could not speak but was everywhere
Maker of what is made

ROBERT BLY

The Mink and Henry James

The mink with his black tip on the lookout for mice
Shamed the snow-washed cornfields with his whiteness.
His leap in the snow taught us to take what we wanted.

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One teaspoon of envy was enough for me
To attack Robert Lowell; with a tablespoon
I could have taken on Henry James and Abelard.

We are too cheerful about our suffering. The rooster,
Seeing his own body flop about on the road,
Says, "It must be that suppertime has come."

Trainers once placed a parrot before a mirror,
And a man behind. The parrot, assuming
A parrot was speaking, would learn to talk.

Perhaps if God would put up a mirror
And sit behind it, and talk, I could believe
That those words of mercy were coming from me.

Why should the rooster go over every detail
Of his beheading? Let's leave some darkness
Around those days when we danced on the road.

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EUGENE GOODHEART

The Power of Elias Canetti

I MET ELIAS CANETTI in a café in Hampstead in 1965 while on a fellowship in London. The photo on the book jacket of a recent edition of his memoirs brings him back to me with a fidelity you rarely expect from photographs. He was stocky with a round well-fed face, a full head of hair, and a mustache. In the photo he is dressed in a three-piece suit and is seated behind a desk upon which lies a manuscript. He stares at the reader with what seems an attentive skepticism, the very picture of a cultivated European. At some point during our acquaintance, he presented me with a copy of his masterwork, *Crowds and Power* (1962), *Masse und Macht* (1960) in its original German version, the product of a thirty-five-year devotion. I dipped into the book, but never read it through until now. His other famous book is *Auto-da-fé* (1935) in which the library of its bibliophile hero, the paranoid sinologist Peter Kien, goes up in flames. Canetti would have appreciated the fate of my copy of *Crowds and Power*. It survived a fire in my own house, its cover permanently darkened by a smoke stain.

Canetti was born in 1905 in Bulgaria, the son of Sephardic parents. The vicissitudes of his family fate brought him to Vienna, Berlin, Lausanne, Zurich, and eventually to England, where he lived until his death in 1994. Fluent in several languages, he wrote exclusively in German. In addition to *Auto-da-fé* and *Crowds and Power*, he is the author of a number of plays (*Comedy of Vanity*, *The Numbered*, and *The Wedding*, among others), books of what he calls "jottings" (most notably, *The Human Province*) and three remarkable memoirs (*The Tongue Set Free*, *The Torch in My Ear*, and *The Play of the Eyes*). He has not been wanting in admirers, among whom are writers of the distinction of Iris Murdoch, John Bayley, Salman Rushdie, Susan Sontag, and George Steiner. And he was the recipient of the Nobel Prize for literature in 1981. But he has remained a singular and diffident figure without a large following who has avoided one of the great pitfalls for intellectuals and artists, celebrity.

In *The Torch in My Ear*, Canetti locates the source of his lifelong obsession with crowds in "one of those not too frequent public events

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that seize an entire city so profoundly that it is no longer the same afterwards." At a coffeehouse in Vienna on June 15, 1927, he reads of a "just verdict" in which a court declares those responsible for the shootings of workers in Burgenland not guilty.

> The acquittal had been termed, nay, trumpeted, as "a just verdict" in the organ of the government party. It was this mockery of any sense of justice rather than the verdict itself that triggered an enormous agitation among the workers of Vienna.

When they set fire to the Palace of Justice, the mayor of the city ordered the police to shoot, causing ninety deaths. "Fifty years have passed, and the agitation of that day is still in my bones. It is the closest thing to a revolution that I have physically experienced."

What is the effect of the event on Canetti? It is not the sense of injustice, which originally moved him, but rather the experience of the crowd in action. He descends into the streets, joins the procession, indeed "dissolves in it" and feels not "the slightest resistance to what the crowd was doing." At the same time, he says "[I was] amazed that despite my frame of mind, I was able to grasp all the concrete individual scenes taking place before my eyes." In *Crowds and Power* Canetti would provide an explanation for the irresistible attraction of the crowd. It rests on a paradox:

> There is nothing that man fears more than the touch of the unknown. . . .Man always tends to avoid physical contact with anything strange. In the dark, the fear of an unexpected touch can amount to panic. . . .It is only in a crowd that man can become free of this fear of being touched. That is the only situation in which the fear changes into its opposite. The crowd he needs is the dense crowd, in which body is pressed to body; a crowd too, whose psychical constitution is also dense, or compact, so that he no longer notices who it is that presses against him. As soon as a man has surrendered himself to the crowd, he ceases to fear its touch.

The crowd is a kind of homeopathy for a universal phobia: the fear of touch.

Canetti dissolves in the crowd and yet finds that he is able to grasp all the events taking place before his eyes. This capacity for participation and detached observation is a remarkable feature of all his work. (He would be an exception to Gustave Le Bon's view in his classic study

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of the crowd in which participants lose themselves in it and any sense of critical objectivity.) The moral indignation that moved Canetti to join the crowd seems to evaporate in his account of its behavior. He becomes a fiercely dispassionate observer of its sensory elements: "the excitement, the advancing, and the fluency of the movement," the dominant presence of the word fire, and then the actual fire. There is the throbbing of his head, shots fired "like whips," the avoidance of corpses, the seeming increase of the size of the corpses in the growing excitement he feels. He notes the overwhelming presence of people and then their vanishing. "Everything yielded and invisible holes open everywhere." Things tug and tear at him. He hears "something rhythmic in the air, an evil music" which elevates him. He experiences himself as a resonant wind. Images of water, fire, and air dominate the scene. Canetti was trained as a chemist, and he seems to combine a visionary poetic gift with a scientific passion for precise notation. In his account the crowd is an agent of neither good nor evil. It is an elemental force to be studied with the objectivity one might use to study the motions of matter, the actions of wolves, lions, and tigers.

Crowds and Power is an idiosyncratic work. Its extensive bibliography makes no reference to Le Bon's work, nor is there any reference to Marx or Freud, though there is a section on the paranoid Dr. Schreber, whom Freud analyzed. Canetti's typology is his own invention. Crowds can be opened or closed; they can be invisible, baiting, prohibition, reversal and feast crowds, each having its own dynamic. They are a development of the "pack," an older unit, whose main characteristic is that it cannot grow, though its "fiercest wish is to be more." Like the crowd, the pack is prolific in the forms it assumes: hunting, war, lamenting, increase. Much of the exposition has the air of apodictic assertion, which the reader can trust or resist, depending on his or her disposition to the work. An example:

> Of the four essential attributes of the crowd which we have come to know, two are only fictitious as far as the pack is concerned, though these are the two which are most strenuously desired and enacted. Hence the other two must be all the more strangely present in actuality. *Growth* and *density* are only acted; *equality* and *direction* really exist. The first thing that strikes one about the pack is its direction; equality is expressed in the fact that all are obsessed by the same goal, the sight of an animal perhaps, which they want to kill.

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It is asserted, not demonstrated, that growth and density are only acted. Why is it that the pack cannot grow? And if it cannot grow, what does an *increase* pack mean? The lucidity of Canetti's prose doesn't always throw light on the motives of his thought.

In the section "On the Psychology of Eating," he writes that "the person who eats alone renounces the prestige which the process would bring him in the eyes of others." And what is the prestige of eating in public? "But when people eat together they can see other's mouths opening. Everyone can watch everyone else's teeth while his own are in action at the same time. To be without teeth is contemptible." The turn of mind here is peculiar to Canetti. I can think of more obvious reasons for eating together: the pleasures of company and conversation. It would be strange, at least for those in advanced societies, to concentrate on the masticating habits of others while eating—though one appreciates a description of those habits by a writer like Canetti or Naipaul. There are numerous passages that are idiosyncratic, if not perverse, in this manner. There are also passages that tell us what we already know without the shock of recognition.

Crowds and Power contains no thesis or doctrine. It is a work of observation and speculation from which one can infer a view of the human condition. For Canetti crowds appear everywhere and in myriad forms and are the source of power, the other major theme of the book. Power has force and violence as it cognates and is invariably destructive. Unlike Hannah Arendt, who distinguished between power as benign and force as malign, Canetti conceives of force as the actualization of power. If there is a moral bias in the work, it is against power. Much of the book is given over to ethnographic accounts of massacres of tribes by other tribes. As a nonreligious, non-Christian writer, Canetti does not believe that man has fallen from grace to a condition of sin. Violence is aboriginally human and has no significant history. Canetti's anthropological perspective creates the impression of endless cycles of destruction, human and non-human. He does not share the Enlightenment view that human nature is malleable and susceptible to the influences of society, for good or evil. Destruction seems to issue from the biology that human beings share with all animal life. At times Canetti reads like a zoologist whose main subject happens to be the human species. His survey of anthropological literature only confirms the conviction that the world wars that have marked our past century were manifestations on a grand scale of what has always been true of human life everywhere. Bosnia, Kosovo, Rwanda, Somalia, Sierra Leone would find their place in a revised edition of *Crowds and Power*. They are the

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normal, not exceptional, events in the story that Canetti tells about human life.

World War I haunts Canetti's imagination of human destructiveness as it did his idol, Karl Kraus, the influential author of *The Last Days of Mankind* and innumerable polemics against the decadence that brought Europe to catastrophe. Canetti tells in his memoirs of the tremendous effect Kraus's lectures (he attended more than a hundred) had on him. And yet the influence of a catastrophic "moment" in history does not translate into a historical perspective on the subject. Although the emergence of democracy in the past two hundred years has focused our minds on crowds and has affected the forms they have taken and their significance, Canetti writes as if crowds have no history.

In a study of power, we expect an attention to its sublimations in politics. We learn of power relationships between chiefs and their tribes, but not of how a knowledge of those relationships can be transferred to an understanding of *political* behavior in advanced societies. Canetti brings Hobbes to mind in his vision of men at war with one another in the state of nature, but unlike Hobbes he has only the rudiments of a political imagination of possible solutions. He writes of parliamentary factions as double crowds, but the translation of one term to another seems little more than a tautology. We are told little of the dynamics of factional life in parliamentary democracies. In this respect, Canetti resembles Foucault, a writer of an altogether different character, for whom power is also pervasive and oppressive. Both writers pay little attention to its political expression and are pessimistic on the question of whether power can be resisted.

In an epilogue, Canetti suggests that the obsession with productivity in both capitalist and socialist countries might be understood as an antidote to war. "Production cannot but be peaceful. War and destruction mean decrease and thus, by definition, harm it. Here capitalism and socialism are at one, twin rivals in the same faith. For both of them production is the apple of their eye and their main concern." This ignores the "creative destruction" (Schumpeter's phrase) that characterizes advanced capitalism or for that matter war itself. Canetti here expresses the faith (not necessarily his own) in our global economy decades before its appearance. He sees parliaments "in its peaceful and regular rotation of power" as another recourse against war and destruction, anticipating current wisdom that there is an affinity between democracy and peace. And he turns to ancient Rome as an example of how "sport can replace war as a crowd phenomenon." (What would he have made of the behavior of soccer fans in his own adopted country, England?)

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Canetti devotes a section to the role of the survivor as an agent of power. We should not confuse Canetti's survivor with how we commonly understand the survivor nowadays. In his exemplary embodiment, he is the person who has survived the concentration camps. He may have done so at the expense of others, but he does not pride himself on having outlived his fellow inmates. On the contrary, for the rest of his life he will bear a burden of guilt. Canetti's survivor seems close to Darwin's conscienceless victor in the struggle for existence, though Darwin is never mentioned in the book. He desires nothing less than to outlive the rest of the world. Ruler or paranoid, often both at the same time, he seeks the extermination of his subjects. Paranoia in this perspective is not so much a pathology as it is the very condition of rule and command. In Sophocles's *Antigone*, Creon's son Haimon warns his father that if he puts Antigone to death he will rule a desert. Haimon reflects the wisdom of the play that to rule one must have subjects. The ruler who remains alone on the earth ceases to be a ruler. Not so for Canetti, for whom the very idea of rule entails destruction. The survivor is not only its embodiment, he is "mankind's worst evil, its curse and perhaps its doom." Canetti wonders whether it is "possible for us to escape him, even now at its last moment." The concluding sentence of his book is a call to the disarmament of power. "If we would master power we must face command openly and boldly, and search for means to deprive it of its sting."

What then is the alternative to power? In one of his most eloquent essays, "Kafka's Other Trial," Canetti finds a recourse against power in Kafka's vulnerability to his father, his lovers—indeed, to every aspect of his world. His account of Kafka's tormented relationship with Felice Bauer is so compelling and so moving that it may overcome a reader's resistance to its affirmation of powerlessness. Would we care to read *The Metamorphosis* or *The Trial* if its author had not transformed the pathos of his existence into a powerful art? Does power need always to be invidious? Shakespeare's answer is in the opening line of sonnet 132: "They that have the power to hurt and will do none." No one desires vulnerability and weakness. What we all desire—I hate to use what has become a cant word—is empowerment. Canetti admits as much when in a "jotting" in *The Human Province* he notes: "I have never heard of a person attacking power without wanting it, and the religious novelists are the worst in this respect." Hannah Arendt had a different sense of power when she understood its absence as a source of violence. Terrorism, for example, is the action of the weak, not of the strong.

Canetti's declared hostility to power may be misleading, for he is clearly attracted to it as a subject for his imagination. When he finds

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power in art, he admires it without reservation. Here is what he has to say about his friend, the sculptor Felix Wortruba:

> He was interested in two things and in them alone: the power of stone and the power of words, in both cases power, but in so unusual a combination of its elements that one took it as a force of nature, no more open to criticism than a storm.

It may be that when Canetti writes of stone and words, he is not thinking of power in the negative conceptual sense that informs his thinking in *Crowds and Power.*

His struggle against power is also a struggle against death, for the two are inextricably bound together in his mind. He desires immortality or longevity, if immortality is unavailable, because of an insatiable curiosity about life. "The highly concrete and serious, the admitted goal of my life is to achieve immortality for men." Here he sets himself against the philosopher's creed that wisdom lies in the graceful acceptance of death. For Rilke, a poet with a philosophical gift, death is the fulfillment of life and only those with unlived lines in their bodies—and they are legion—fear it. Canetti might have accepted death if he were guaranteed the time to satisfy his desire to fully know the world. Most people don't want to die. If given a choice with the full knowledge of the prospect, few would want to live forever, especially if the promise of immortality was not accompanied by eternal youth. In his beautiful poem "Tithonus," Tennyson evokes the pathos of the goddess Aurora's lover, whom she granted immortal life, but not eternal youth.

> The woods decay, the woods decay and fall,
> The vapours weep their burthen to the ground,
> Man comes and tills the field and lies beneath,
> And after many a summer dies the swan.
> Me only cruel immortality
> Consumes; I wither slowly in thine arms. . .

But would eternal youth be sufficient? Wouldn't the boredom of a several-hundred-year existence become unbearable? Moreover, what of its consequences for new birth and new life? The virtue of a Christian conception of an afterlife is that it satisfies a desire for immortality that doesn't threaten future life on earth. And how does Canetti reconcile his view of the survivor as "mankind's worst evil" with his own desire for immortality? Although I do not share his immortal longings, I

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find something admirable in his stubborn refusal to submit to conventional wisdom. Risking death is a familiar experience. The risks of longevity might be worth taking, but they require a person of singular capacities.

In the memoir *The Play of the Eyes*, Canetti reproduces an exchange he had with his friend, the novelist Herman Broch. He had given Broch a copy of his manuscript, *Kant Catches Fire*, the original title of *Auto-da-fé*. Broch was struck, even scandalized by the grotesqueness of the characters in the novel. Canetti admitted that he was influenced by Gogol: "I wanted the most extreme characters at once ludicrous and horrible. I wanted the ludicrous and the horrible to be indistinguishable." And he conceded that he had a desire to terrify people, because he found everything around him terrifying. One of the terrifying characters is the protagonist, Peter Kien, a bibliophile of monstrous proportions—perhaps a parodic version of Canetti himself. The memoirs create the impression of an extremely bookish person. Like D. H. Lawrence, Canetti in his youth and young manhood was completely absorbed by his mother with whom he shared a passion for books. She had three sons, of whom Elias was the eldest, and never remarried. Whenever a suitor came on the scene and threatened the family romance, Elias made it clear to her that remarriage was out of the question. He would not allow it. His own fidelity to her turned out to be less reliable than hers to him. When women came into his life, he concealed their presence. Eventually he broke the hold that mother and son had on each other and married. His younger brother Georg took over the role of the utterly devoted son. But the bookish bond between mother and son was a permanent legacy and contributed to the kind of writer he became. One might be tempted to say that his sense of reality has been skewed by his bookishness, if it were not that he seems to be aware of the danger of living in books. The novel ends in a book burning: Canetti knows their dangerous combustible power.

There is violence enough everywhere around him, but what of the violence in Canetti himself? In his childhood, when he was not yet literate, he had tried to murder his older cousin Laurica with an ax, because she would not let him see her notebooks. The family assembled to discuss "the homicidal child."

> I could plead all I liked that Laurica tortured me bloody; the fact that I, at the age of five, had reached for the ax to kill her—indeed, the very fact that I had been able to carry the heavy ax in front of me—was incomprehensible to everyone. I think they understood

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> that the "writing," "the script," had been so important to me; they were Jews, and "Scripture" meant a great deal to all of them, but there had to be something very bad and dangerous in me to the point of wanting to murder my playmate.

When Canetti told Broch that his lifework would be crowds, Broch responded that there was nothing to learn from a study of mass behavior. "You can't discover [its laws], because there aren't any. You'd be wasting your time. Better stick to your plays. You're a writer." Canetti had no answer, but he stuck to his guns, because it was in crowds that he could best express the violence that he found in life, in books, and in himself.

His claim to distinction does not rest on a set of original or compelling ideas. He is not a master of a particular genre, though he was the author of many plays, essays, "jottings," and a singular (in more than one sense) novel. *Crowds and Power* eludes generic definition and lacks the intellectual or scholarly substance of other works on the subject. (A recent scholarly introduction to Le Bon's work provides an extensive list of books and articles on crowds but makes no mention of Canetti's book.) His is an achievement of sensibility, which has its fulfillment in the memoirs. He is an obsessively patient observer and listener, always at an odd angle to events, alert to what is strange, weird, and frightening in his and our experience.

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ANITA SHAPIRA

From the Palmach Generation to the Candle Children: Changing Patterns in Israeli Identity

Gvile Esh (*Parchments of Fire*), a memorial volume of posthumous literary texts penned by soldiers who fell in Israel's War of Independence, opens with a passage by Zvi Guber:

> How poor, how wretched you are, O homeland. . .there is nothing in you of that splendor sublime, of majesty that stirs the heart. Why then did our souls so cling to your love? . . .From your dust were we molded, from your soil we sprouted, your children. . . .To us you were both mother and father, our nursemaid and teacher! We are your harvest. . .we are with you, true to the last.
>
> Behold: we poured forth the best of our young blood to drench your dust. Upon the altar of your freedom we laid the cream of our youth, a sacrifice to liberty.
>
> Find favor in the youthful vigor of our offering, O motherland!

If we disregard the ornate style, untypical of the first Sabra generation eager to break free from the confining literary Hebrew of their parents and find a more forthright and simple language, we have here a text that bespeaks the ideological tenor and temperament of the generation of young women and men for which the poet Natan Alterman coined the epithet the "silver platter": the first generation of native sons and daughters, bred in Palestine, a group inseparably linked with the figure of Yitzhak Rabin. The homeland they cherished was a land of open expanses, parched wadis, of baked clods of earth that crumbled beneath the naked foot under the scorching summer sun. There were no cities, asphalt roads, factories, or dense concentrations of population. It was a homeland of fields in the Jezreel Valley redolent with "the scent of manure, the aroma of new-mown hay" (as in a popular song of the day).

Zvi Guber's cohort was part of a generation issued forth at the end of the 1930s whose identity was shaped in the decade that followed. The sabra or prickly pear cactus was a plant unfamiliar to the founding

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fathers in their lands of origin. It bloomed on the edge between the verdant land and the desert, thorny and stinging on the outside but sweet and juicy within. This seized the imagination of the settlers who emigrated from Europe: here was an emblem of the new experience and ambiance, exotic and oriental. So the pioneer first generation embraced it to symbolize their children raised to adolescence and adulthood in Palestine, the quintessence of Palestinian youth: native sons and daughters, almost children of nature, liberated from the inhibitions of their parents, forthright and simple—unencumbered by the oppression of Jewish history or the dubious legacy of European culture. Young men and women, for whom the idea of Zionism was self-evident, prepared to sacrifice their lives for the creation of the Jewish state. They liked to envision and represent the struggle for an independent Israel as one chapter in the broader ongoing global struggle for human emancipation, designating their war "Milhemet Hashihrur"—the War of Liberation against the oppressive yoke of imperialism. That was the first generation of indigenous Israelis, who came to be dubbed the Palmach generation.

Zvi Guber, Yitzhak Rabin, and their comrades did not constitute a majority among Jewish youth in the era of the Yishuv. Many chose a lifestyle where a successful career, material pleasures, academic study, and the world's manifold allurements loomed foremost in their scale of values. Nonetheless, society in the Yishuv and at least the state's first decade adopted the image of the mythological Sabra as the model to which they aspired, their fundamental matrix and paradigm. This model was not free of flaws and imperfections: forthrightness degenerated at times into coarseness, love for Eretz Israel into imperviousness toward the other people in and on the land. Their shared experiential world engendered a sense of haughtiness toward anyone not part of their special in-group. Yet their merits and virtues were accented, their shortcomings obscured.

The literary creations of the generation of the War of Independence (1948), by writers such as Moshe Shamir, Natan Shaham, S. Izhar, Uri Avneri, and the poems and ballads by Hayyim Guri and Hayyim Hefer, to mention the best-known among them, attested to that model. Even more, these literary texts filtered and refined that paradigm, infusing it with identificational features that characterized the member of a small closed group with its own Hebrew vernacular and distinctive rituals: the *kumzitz* campfire cookout, the coffee *finjan* making the rounds, the songs and camaraderie.

There was an anachronistic element adhering to this image almost from the moment it crystallized. The mass influx of immigrants that commenced while the battles raged in 1948 created a new situation in

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the State of Israel, marking a rupture in the previous realities of the Yishuv. This transformed state of affairs bore numerous new revolutionary features that necessitated changes in consciousness and culture. Thus, at the very moment the first stage of Israeli identity ripened to maturity, embodied in the identity and ethos of the Sabra, salient elements also surfaced that were destined to undermine its moorings.

To all appearances, the transition from the Yishuv to the state was a stunning success story—the creation of the institutions of government, the formation of a national defense force, and the establishment of the basic frameworks for the functioning of national life. Yet that revolutionary and sweeping transition from a small and lean network of institutions to a broad and open array of organs for governance was not accompanied by a corresponding shift in the emotional foundations of the society, its modes of thought, and cultural structures. They continued to be anchored in the sentiments, temperament, and elemental approaches that had crystallized during the period of the Yishuv. To make use of a metaphor, the culture of the campfire circle which had been cultivated as an emblem of the pervasive camaraderie of the Palmach and youth movement, also became a token of exclusiveness—the exclusion of anyone external to that ethos, and in whom the old symbology of Eretz Israel did not strike an immediate responsive chord.

The decades of the 1950s and 1960s witnessed the emergence of a new generation, termed in common parlance the "sons of the State." In its amplified sense, this designates a specific cultural elite that reviled the literature of the Palmach generation. In their onslaughts on what they dubbed the collectivistic culture of the "first person plural," Natan Zach, David Avidan, Yehuda Amichai, and Amalia Cahannah-Carmon rocked the foundations of Kassit and other coffeehouses that were the frequent haunts of the Israeli boheme. To it they counterposed the claims of the individual to autonomy and freedom from the restrictive shackles of the collective. Most members of this group belonged to the Palmach generation, yet they repudiated the literary school of their peers, preoccupied in their writings solely with their own life-world, a literature that gave expression to the collective Eretz-Israeli experience. Socialist realism, a common style and stance in their work, also infuriated the "modernists."

On the one hand, they wished to forge a link with the European cultural avant-garde, on the other, they sought to sunder the historical bonds tying Hebrew literature to the Zionist enterprise. Those links had been an essential component in the creation of the nation. Though they were termed the generation of the State, so as to distinguish them from the preceding Palmach generational cohort, many made up what was

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only a different cultural elite drawn from the ranks of that same "native-son" youth.

For the truly Israeli-bred sons of the State, the War of Independence was only a childhood memory. The first war they participated in was the 1956 Sinai Campaign or the Six-Day War. They were raised and schooled in a state whose borders were marked by the armistice lines that came to be called the "Green Line." The sons and daughters of the State had been brought up and educated in the shadow of the Palmach generation. Yet the War of Independence loomed larger than life, and members of the generation of the State were plagued by a gnawing feeling of having missed the boat of glory—no wars were left to fight, no bold deeds by which to prove their mettle, no new states to bring into being. That generation was plagued by a distinct sense of inferiority vis-à-vis the Palmach native sons, and took on the character of those treading in the footsteps of the first victors and trailblazers. Just as the Palmach generation had constituted the elite of Palestinian youth, the sons and daughters of the State comprised but a small group within an Israeli society caught up in the grips of swift and powerful change. Nonetheless, the values subscribed to by that group were deemed at the time to represent the very acme of what it meant to be Israeli.

To each generation its own myths. One of the compelling myths of the 1950s and 1960s was that of Petra. The march to Petra, the ancient Nabatean capital south of the Dead Sea, sprung from the matrix of the Palmach experience, but soon came to symbolize the ambivalence in culture and values of the fledgling state. The first five who stole across the border to Petra, only to meet death on their journey back (August 1953) were Palmach members who felt the lack of any challenge and were "seeking tomorrow." They still had not comprehended the real meaning of a border and the dangers inherent in a stealthy crossing. In their eyes, the quest to Petra was part of a journey into the desert wilds, infused with the enchantment of leaving behind civilization on an expedition into the wilderness, the breaching of boundaries by scouts on foot.

Rahel Sevorai and Meir Har-Tziyon (a member of the Israeli-born generation and one of its icons) had accomplished the exploit several months before. In their descriptions, they downplayed the importance of the dangers and difficulties of such a journey—that was consonant with the ethos common to the era, which deemed it taboo to brag about feats of daring. The five who perished did not believe they were endangering their lives by embarking upon this venture. Those who attempted the trek in 1956 and 1957 were well aware of the perils it entailed and saw this as a dimension of Petra's challenge.

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In Yehoshua Kenaz's *Hitganvut Yehidim* (*On Lonely Reconnaissance*), the hero of the tale, set in the 1950s, takes part in a training course for physically handicapped recruits, but makes a supreme effort to prove to himself and those around him, who expect him to be a fighter, that he can indeed live up to their great expectations. He ultimately buckles under pressure, loses his sense of reality, and resorts to dissembling, pretending to be an officer in a combat unit. There is a powerful nexus between Kenaz's protagonist and the heroes who ventured to Petra: all seek to live up to the stringent criteria of courage and derring-do which the society deemed an expression of true manly valor and self-sacrifice. Those youths were supreme individualists, and it is no accident that in their eyes, Meir Har-Tziyon, the scout alone out on patrol, embodied the symbol of their aspirations. But their individualism did not rail against the received norms in the society. On the contrary; it sought to bring them to true fulfillment. "The individualists did not turn *against* all the others, rather they aspired to outdo them, to be something more."

For the identity of the sons of the State, journeying to Petra was salient from another dimension as well. Petra was an alluring lodestone of Nabatean culture. It bore no link whatsoever with Jewish history in the Land of Israel either in ancient times or the more recent present. Their quest expressed a profound longing for a world beyond the horizon, a site replete with its own mystique and mystery, beyond the imagination to conceive. It expressed the lust for adventure of a youth brought up in a state with hermetic closed borders, in an era when a trip abroad was beyond the reach of all but a few.

The myth of Petra is paradigmatic for the aims of that generation and its scale of cardinal norms. The model of the scout emulated by Meir Har-Tziyon reflects the paragon of the Palmach patrol. But in contrast with the Palmach's distinctive camaraderie, Meir Har-Tziyon and those who ventured to Petra were more reminiscent of the lonely rider in Hollywood westerns: the fearless fighter, ever pushing toward the frontier, into broad borderless spaces, distant from all settled habitation. Destinations were selected based on the likelihood of accomplishing the exploit and the adventurous challenge they represented, and embodied no link with the Jewish past in the land.

Amos Kenan once remarked: "For me, the state murdered the homeland." For him, the "homeland" signified those expanses not settled by Jews, territory one could gaze upon and in the mind's eye imagine being transported back to the days of the Bible. But the young state underwent an accelerated process of construction and industrialization—small cubicles of residential blocks and concrete in the virgin landscape.

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Hedges of sabra cactus were supplanted by metal or stone fences, and the creaking cadence of the old water pump was swept aside by the rotating sprinkler and the national water conduit. The pre-state romanticism of the days of the Mandate, of olive trees and shepherds' flocks, camels' bells and the doleful lament of the flute, immortalized by Israeli artists on canvas, in song, and in literature, retreated before the headlong surge of development of the modern state. Among members of the Palmach generation, Kenan's outlook was widespread.

In contrast, the Israeli-bred generation of the State was not pining for some "beautiful and forgotten Land of Israel," as Naomi Shemer wrote. They had not known the Arab villages destroyed in the War of Independence and in its wake. Nor did they yearn for a mode of existence and lifestyle that had been swept away. They grew to adolescence and adulthood in a state where Arabs constituted a threat, dangerous enemies who stole over the border, a kind of demonic force from the desert coming to ravage the fertile land. For that generation, the Green Line *was the border.*

The new Hebrew literature that ripened in the period of the State also had no hankering for some ancient historical agenda with Biblical sites and vistas. It was anchored in the reality of modern Jewish life, whether dealing with the period prior to the establishment of the state or thereafter. Tel Aviv, the new Jerusalem, the *kibbutzim*—these were the foci of the new Hebrew literature. In an interview with Geula Cohen in the newspaper *Maariv* in 1963, Yitzhak Shalev, a writer with right-wing inclinations, complained that the "cease-fire lines have become our emotional borders, the boundary to our longings and desires." He lamented that no poem or tale had ventured further south in setting than Kibbutz Ramat Rahel (overlooking the old border south of Jerusalem) or further east than Mount Zion. His disapproval described the basic parameters: the parting from historical Eretz Israel was not just a political fact but had also been internalized as an existential experience by the Israel-bred generation of the State.

The Six-Day War constituted the high point of the myth of the Sabra. The General Staff in 1967 was proud of its strong links with the Palmach, from Chief of Staff Yitzhak Rabin to Barlev, Uzi Narkis, and others. The conquest of Jerusalem was conceived as completing the mission of the Harel Brigade from the War of Independence, a belated payment of sorts for a long-standing debt to the valiant men who had fallen in battle back then. Moshe Dayan, the warrior with an eye patch, became the veritable symbol of Sabra pluck and élan, the emblem of a small and intrepid Israel.

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Yitzhak Rabin, the rugged and handsome Chief of Staff who delivered a stirring speech in the amphitheater of Hebrew University on Mount Scopus, facing the inhabited land, his back to the desert, seemed an embodiment of all that was admirable in the new Israeli paradigm: fusing ancient Jewish tradition with the new reality, a brave conqueror, yet compassionate in victory and sensitive to the sufferings of the enemy, illustrious in battle but fully aware of its heavy price, ready for war but desirous of peace. Never before or since was there an Israeli identity more self-assured, more clearly defined and unequivocal.

In the forge of the Six-Day War, a link was welded between those two Israeli generations. The officers were "native sons," the enlisted men under their command were soldiers raised and trained in the State. For the first time in Israel's military history, fathers and sons fought together shoulder to shoulder, but their responses to the war differed. The fathers felt they were returning to the homeland they had known and loved in their youth. By contrast, the sons were burdened by the perception that they were invaders in a foreign land. The "native sons" were endowed with a distinctive facility: they were able not to see the Arabs, be blind to them.

Prior to 1967, it had been Yitzhak Shalev's wont to accompany his son Meir to the Notre Dame monastery to gaze together at the vista of the Old City. This was part of his son's upbringing, a lesson in love for Eretz Israel and Jerusalem. From afar, it was impossible to make out the flesh-and-blood inhabitants who lived there. But, as a soldier on the Jericho Road, Meir Shalev would encounter Arab refugees fleeing with their bundled belongings. He also came face to face with the harsh reality of the occupation—the kowtowing and abasement of the humbled conquered, the overbearing arrogance of the conquerors. For him, these experiences expunged once and for all the dream of Greater Israel—the land in its Biblical entirety.

Another young man from Jerusalem had an analogous experience, he too was from the ranks of the sons of the State. Amos Oz returned to East Jerusalem after the war: the city resembled new Jerusalem in the west—the identical sky, the same stones.

> But the city is breathing, alive. People live there who are strangers. I don't understand their language. They're in their homes, their shops and businesses, and I'm the stranger from outside. . . .The city where I was born. The city of dreams. The city of my fathers' longing, the yearnings of my people. And I was sentenced to walk through its streets and alleyways, submachine gun in hand, like a

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figure from the monstrous nightmares of my childhood. Consigned to be a stranger in a city so strange.

On September 22, 1967, the Movement for Greater Israel published its manifesto. It was signed by distinguished personalities from the world of Hebrew letters: Alterman, Agnon, Uri Zvi Greenberg, and other respected and renowned figures. The list of names represented several generations in Israeli society and culture ranging from veteran authors like Agnon to younger artists such as Moshe Shamir, and included several from the Palmach generation. Yet, not a single one of the signatories stemmed from the sons of the State.

I do not wish to contend that that entire generation was opposed to the territorial concept of Greater Israel. But it is important to underscore that the intellectual elite which came to maturity in the small state was not imbued with that sense of possessiveness and mastery over all the Land of Israel inscribed so deeply in the psyche of many who had grown to maturity in mandatory Palestine. For A. B. Yehoshua, Amos Oz, Meir Shalev, Yehoshua Kenaz, and David Grossman, the legitimate state and the confines of Israeli rule were limited to the territory within the cease-fire lines. It halted there. Beyond that perimeter lay a foreign land whose inhabitants were hostile—a land under the boot, not liberated, occupied territories and not ancient patrimony. The distinction was between a historical legacy anchored in Biblical tradition and contemporary political conclusions based on the present situation. This perspective was grounded in the mentality of "Little Israel" that had crystallized over nineteen years of solitude.

The Six-Day War stirred up anew all the old questions about Israeli identity that had been seemingly laid to rest in the decade of stability preceding the war. In the cunning of history, the greatest Israeli victory engendered doubts about Israel's right to the land. The encounter with the Arabs in the Land of Israel was traumatic, its implications disconcerting. For the first time since 1948, people began to grapple in classrooms and seminars with thorny issues such as the Arab refugees, Palestinian self-identity, and administrative detentions. The "Arab question," marginal in "Little Israel" prior to 1967, was now raised anew and became a major topic, not only on the political stage but also at deeper levels, bound up with the entire complexity of Israeli self-identity. From the moment Yeshayahu Leibovitz publicly broached the dilemma of the corruptive occupation, the contradiction between rule over a foreign people and democracy has remained front and center on the public agenda.

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The invidious image of fathers sacrificing their sons began cropping up in the immediate wake of the Six-Day War, and intensified in the period of the War of Attrition between Egyptian and Israeli forces (October 1968 to August 1970): a leadership waiting for a phone call, portrayed as incapable of seizing upon the slightest crack of light for advancing peace, prepared to sacrifice their young sons to the Moloch of a war without end. Gyrating around that motif were such public manifestations as the famous "letter of the '68ers" in which the sons of the state's leaders upbraided their elders for not pursuing the cause of peace with greater resolve, and the staging of the *Queen of the Bathroom*, a political satire that triggered a storm of public controversy, chastising the army and the older generation in general.

Of course, there was also the impact from the broader climate of turbulence abroad: the 1968 revolt in France, as students rose in violent protest against the establishment, and the student unrest against the draft and the war in Vietnam that was rocking the United States. The Israeli "Song of Peace" that entered history on that momentous evening in November 1995 was patterned on a similar song in the 1969 musical *Hair*. To a much greater extent than the pre-1967 provincial state, Greater Israel was now opened up and exposed to the wide world beyond. It discovered Israel and Israel discovered the world.

Yet this protest was an authentic indigenous Israeli expression of the contradictions between the established and younger elites that was manifested in the profound sense of resentment and exasperation felt by the young, no longer confident that the leadership at the state's helm was indeed steering a course toward peace. As Amos Eilon had already remonstrated in a 1970 series of articles on the "gap between generations and the gulf in credibility": "When you take from this nation the belief in peace, you shatter something vital and essential deep inside."

But Israeli identity was still coiled around the armature of preparedness for sacrifice, the obligation of courage, and the disgrace of evading one's duty. The authors of the "letters of the '68ers" did not contemplate the idea of refusing to serve in combat. American students were heading north across the border to Canada, their Israeli peers ended their quandaries in the trenches at the Suez Canal. But this was the first intimation of the tremors below shaking the consciousness of educated Israeli youth.

In the public mind, the Yom Kippur War marked the defeat of the Sabra generation. Moshe Dayan, the dauntless warrior, was emblematic of all that was good and bad in that generation. He symbolized creativity and cockiness, courage and boastfulness, simplicity of manner that could mutate to hedonism. He had a gift for improvisation that led to

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contempt for the law, and revolted against bourgeois conventions in a way that degenerated into indifference toward public opinion. From an icon revered by a substantial segment of the Israeli public, Dayan was transformed overnight into the symbol of an entire generation's debacle: "How have you fallen from heaven, bright morning star."

Weaknesses that were excused in the days of glory were now enumerated in obloquy. Dayan was not the only target singled out for denigration. The chief of staff and the entire military elite were also hauled over the coals of public censure. The Israeli Defense Force (IDF), that pivot of Israeli identity, had remained above the fray in the political and cultural arena. The salvos against it in the *Queen of the Bathroom* controversy had been viewed as undermining the bedrock of Israeli society. Now the IDF stood in the dock of public opinion. This was the Israeli "twilight of the gods."

The political expression of the transformation in Israeli identity came in 1977 with the revolution at the ballot box that catapulted the Likud Party to power. All who felt spurned and degraded under the press of the dominant Israeli identity now had an opportunity to avenge that sense of humiliation. Fighters from the right-wing pre-state undergrounds, Oriental Jews, and Holocaust survivors all began to clamor for their place in the sun, their corner in Israeli identity and collective memory. The typical Israeli was no longer the eternal youth clad in open shirt and shorts. New types began to appear in media representations, dressed in that elegant look of nonchalant neglect considered en vogue among designers on the international stage.

But that process was not one-sided: the photo of a handsome young man in a bright blue shirt, the emblem of the youth movement, rifle in hand and radiating the aura of the old pioneering spirit, began to appear frequently in publications of a new party that had been founded at that same time. The Tehiya (Regeneration) marked the far Right in the Israeli political spectrum. Actually, the photo was of the writer Yaakov Shabtai as a young man, an image the Tehiya had unknowingly adopted as its pictorial icon. Shabtai, who belonged to another political camp, vehemently objected. His critique pointed up a significant phenomenon: namely the appropriation and refurbishing of old outmoded symbols of the Left by newer political currents far to the right.

In the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War, two extra-parliamentary movements emerged: Gush Emunim (Bloc of the Faithful) and Shalom Akhshav (Peace Now). Both arose from within the sons of the State; in many respects, both carried aloft the banner of idealism that had characterized the "Small Israel" of the 1950s and early 1960s and had waned in

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the social and cultural climate of the Greater Israel after 1967. There were first intimations of these two currents, marking a profound and deep ideological cleavage, in the weeks immediately following the Six-Day War. The critical voices raised in *Siah Lohamim* (*Combatants Discourse*) and the humanistic sentiments articulated in the discussions documented in the book led to the founding of the Peace Now movement.

Yet there was one discourse that contained views and comments so grating on the ears of listeners that they were not included in the book but published separately in *Shdemot* (*Cornfields*), the journal of the *kibbutzim*. This was the transcript of a discussion held at the Yeshivat Merkaz Harav; its participants included a number of young men who several years later would rise to the leadership of Gush Emunim. The disciples of Merkaz Harav did not deny the fact that on the eve of the Six-Day War they had harbored no dreams of conquest of the Land of Israel, nor did they long for the Old City in Jerusalem. The messianic element did not appear as yet in their thinking.

The difficulty that erupted in that discussion and so dismayed participants from the Left was the attitude of Merkaz Harav graduates toward the Arabs. The religious co-discussants repudiated the humanistic approach that had been fundamental in all the other talks with the fighters. When the topic turned to the fate of Arab combat soldiers, values such as sanctity of human life and respect for the human dignity of the enemy were of no importance to the young men from Merkaz Harav. This talk heralded the schism in mentality well before the question of the Jewish settlements in territory with dense Arab population was propelled onto the public agenda.

That cleft grew wider and deeper with the years. The generation of the State was divided along the lines of two configurative experiences flowing from the Six-Day War and its aftermath: one mytho-historical, the other that of occupation. Amos Oz defined its contours in asking: what do you see when you look at the territories—the land or the people? Those who could see only the land gave a stamp of legitimacy to the blinkered view that turned a blind eye to the humanity of the Arab inhabitants. All the rest sprang directly from that. Anyone whose eyes are open to the human beings will see their suffering, their insult and injury, their rage and hatred—and search for solutions out of the impasse. From that juncture on, the sons of the State have remained a generation divided. And here perhaps lies the source of various afflictions in Israeli society that have festered down to the present.

Since the late 1980s, a new generational group has appeared, still unnamed though possible to label the "postmodern generation." Dani

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Carmi, a young soldier who had seen action in the Intifada, said in *Maariv*:

> As far as I'm concerned, the world can go to hell. Let 'em drop a bomb on it. I've got no damn interest in the rain forests or people who are starving. What interests me is my job, my friends, and my family. My parents hope some day that'll change. I don't know.

That sense of self is the polar opposite to Zvi Guber. It is also the antipode to the individualism in the early days of the state, not individualism rising up against existing reality in a desire to transform its parameters, but the individualism of the snail in its shell—of someone in retreat from responsibility for the community into an absolutely private existence.

Indeed, we've come a long way from Guber to Carmi. Yehoshua Kenaz's new novel, *Mahzir Ahavot Kodmot* (*Returning Past Loves*) provides a mirror reflecting the new reality. You will recall that in his *Hitganvut Yehidim*, Kenaz describes how the individual is coerced by social pressures into valor on the battlefield. In *Mahzir Ahavot Kodmot*, he portrays a young man who deserts his military unit and the reactions of his family members. Right down to the end of the tale, the reader doesn't know why the soldier has decided to desert and why he finally chooses to return to the army. His father, a son of the State, finds it difficult to condone his boy's derelict behavior, and basically tries to find out the why and wherefore of his actions. He does not get any answer. But the society around him seems tolerant of his son's erring ways, and the father comes to understand and accept his boy and the altered social situation.

This is the portrait of a society that has broken from the tethers of its traditions and looks to a wishful world in which people live, love, suffer, and die suspended in a kind of vacuum unlinked to time or place. All that remains is the private individual ego.

This generational phenomenon is alarming in its implications, since it raises difficult questions about the social cement binding the individual to society, the ligature and balance between private and public.

The old Israeli modal identity was characterized by its collective mainspring: even individuals who did not adopt it felt that it represented them. Is there a common Israeli identity today? What is an Israeli? A settler on the West Bank, in military fatigues and *tallith*, with skull cap and automatic rifle? An ultra-Orthodox youth from B'nei B'rak dutiful to the directives of his Hasidic rebbe? A youngster from the Sheinkin Street bohemian milieu in downtown Tel Aviv with a

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weird, attention-grabbing hair style? A newcomer immigrant from Russia proud of his language and culture? Or one from Ethiopia who has struggled for recognition as a Jew by the Chief Rabbinate? An Ashkenazi who loves classical music, or an Oriental Jew who prefers Eastern rhythms and riffs? Or maybe there exists a silent Israeli majority, secular in outlook yet wishing to keep a link to ancient Jewish tradition, who long for peace with security, who want economic progress—or simply just to get on with their lives, like any human being? And what about the Arab citizens of the state? And of course, we could have framed the whole passage in gendered terms, shifting the focus to the other 50 percent of the population that is not male.

The optimists will argue that we are in a phase of transition and from all the friction and clash between contending sub-identities a new Israeli identity will issue forth. It's a normal process. But if it's so good and normal, why is it so hard and painful?

The assassination of Yitzhak Rabin marked a watershed, a foundational event in Israeli society. At the time it seemed that a new generation had made its debut upon the historical stage, the Candle Children generation: the Israeli youth who had grown to adolescence in the shadow and smoke of the Intifada and blossomed in the glow of the peace process initiated at Oslo. This generation reeled in shock with the death of the revered leader, the collective father who symbolized hope for a better tomorrow. Will the shaping experience of that generation help to fuel a new nihilism, the loss of basic existential moorings such as we witnessed in the manifestation of the snail retreating into its shell? Or will it perhaps serve as a basis for a return to a rejuvenated sense of solidarity, the creation of a new collective will? A shared spirit that is moderate, tolerant, respective of diversity and difference, but also desirous of creating a constructive public space—positive, responsible, and able to weld together diverse segments of society. Will this generation become ensnared in the quagmire of despair, bogged down in cynicism devoid of any hope? Or will it be able to take stock and translate its trauma into a new set of blueprints and visions for building a better social order?

Five years have passed since those days of blood and sorrow. On May 17, 1999, the Candle Children went to the polls for the first time. They seem to have given a clue to their state of mind: are we witnessing the emergence of a new generational cohort which will leave its imprint on Israeli society and culture?

Translated from the Hebrew by William Templer

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KATHLEEN AGENA

Letter from Albania

> The Serbs in Old Serbia, in their national endeavor to correct data in the ethnographical statistics that are not quite favorable to them, are engaged quite simply in systematic extermination of the Muslim population.
>
> Leon Trotsky, 1912

In Albania there is a natural spring known as the Dragon's Eye. Centuries ago, according to legend, a dragon lived beneath its waters. Once a year, the dragon would emerge and, if a virgin were sacrificed to it, the country would be blessed with prosperity and well-being. Today, all that remains at the actual site is an eerie, eye-shaped reflection floating on the surface of a spring where dozens of iridescent dragonflies flitter.

The Balkan region is rife with similar legends. "We are a people who live in the past," Virgil Mujick, an official in Albania's Ministry of Culture, observes as we stand beside the Dragon's Eye spring. The rationale for this historical regression derives from decades of domination under totalitarian regimes during which centuries-old blood feuds and ancient myths were perpetuated as a way to retain a sense of cultural identity against the depersonalizing effects of "socialist realism." While legends and myths nourished the Balkan spirit under the grip of authoritarian governments, they have also, at times, assumed a more pragmatic purpose. Leaders who know how deeply such folklore resonates in the Balkan soul have used them to manipulate popular sentiment for their own political objectives. Like the ideology of totalitarianism, the rhetoric used by political figures does not always correspond to the reality of the conditions being described. Events that occurred long ago in the Balkans may become so distorted and inflated over the years that they assume the dimensions of a Hollywood extravaganza or, in some cases, an apotheosis.

Clearly, the latter has occurred with the Battle of Kosovo, where a conflict between the Ottoman Empire and Serbia in 1389 has become equated with the Christian Passion in Serbian mythology with Kosovo becoming Serbia's Jerusalem and the Serbian prince who was killed

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during the conflict portrayed as a Christ-like martyr. While political decisions in the Balkans are frequently based more on mythic distortions rather than real events, reality is often the spark that is used by demagogues to inflame the popular will. The horrors of Bosnia, for example, may well have had their origin in an emotional speech given by Slobodan Milosovic at a festival held in 1987 commemorating the Battle of Kosovo. With the economy of Yugoslavia wobbling and its citizens disillusioned and restless for new leadership, Milosovic—who seems determined to pursue his ultra-nationalistic, ultra-ethnic ideology to lunatic extremes—returned to the Kosovo mythos to deflect attention from his own weakening power base, proclaiming passionately, "Every nation has a love which eternally warms its heart. For Serbs, it is Kosovo." Two years later, the Constitution that had given Kosovo virtually independent status from Yugoslavia was revoked, and the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) began to rebel using what amounted to terrorist tactics at times and stirring up old ethnic rivalries throughout the Balkan region. As Miranda Vickers observed in her book *Between Serb and Albanian: A History of Kosovo*, "Everything started with Kosovo, and everything will end there." Yet, when the Dayton Accords were hammered out, the issues pertaining to Kosovo itself were largely ignored, and consequently the conflict between Serbs and the Muslims in Kosovo re-emerged, like one of the Hydra's multiple heads.

It was, in part, due to a memorandum drafted early in the conflict by U.S. envoy Robert Gelbart that characterized the KLA as terrorists which shaped our policy, or rather our lack of policy, toward the region, and contributed to our failure to act with force as soon as we should have. Added to this was the fact that U.S. Ambassador Reyerson notified high officials in the Albanian government in 1992 that the United States would cut off aid to the country if Salie Berisha were not re-elected Prime Minister, not only because the U.S. did not want the Communists to return to power, but also because Berisha was playing a hands-off policy toward Kosovo. Of course, the fact that our European NATO allies believed this was a matter for them to handle, since it was occurring on their doorstep, also accounted for paralyzing the collective public will to intervene in the conflict. That the Muslims were portrayed by the media as "ethnic Albanians," which tended to make it appear as if they were merely a minority, rather than the majority of the population in Kosovo also added to blurring the issues involved in the conflict and to dulling public opinion against intervention. Had the media described the dispute accurately as one between Christians and Muslims, the larger dimensions of the conflict might not

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have been so difficult to convey, not only the possibility of the war spreading into Albania and then on to Greece and eventually Turkey—disrupting NATO's own integrity and security—but also connecting the conflict in Kosovo with other conflicts between militant Christians and Muslims that were occurring in Africa, especially in Sudan, and in the Chechnyan region of the Russian Republic, all of which amplify the particular dynamics of the conditions that exist in Kosovo. Moreover, had Muslims been slaughtering Serbs to the degree that the latter were carrying on an "ethnic cleansing," it is doubtful that either the Europeans or the United States would have dithered around for so long before using force to stop the war. It is of some significance that Oswald Spengler, early in the century that has recently passed, predicted that the wars at the end of this period would be primarily religious conflicts. It seemed a foolhardy statement then during a time of increasing secularization, but it has, in fact, proven to be correct.

It was the possibility of the conflict moving beyond Kosovo into Albania, already in a fragile condition due to the complete collapse of its economy following a fraudulent pyramid financial scheme launched by its former government, that brought me to this country as a member of a team consisting of officials from the World Bank and the Policy Sciences Center at Yale's Law School. We went there to assist in launching a $50-million economic and cultural development project aimed at shoring up Albania's southern coast, which borders directly on Greece. The meeting with the Prime Minister took place at Butrint, designated a world historical site by UNESCO. Butrint is a remarkable place. Virgil wrote the *Aeneid* there, and the site also contains an enormous amphitheater, the first Roman baptistry, and the remains of several civilizations, including those of the ancient Illyrians, who acquired significant power because, from this site, they could control the Straits of Corfu. It was initially saved for preservation and research by two English lords, and now Lord Rothschild, former head of the Bank of England, is trustee of the Butrint Foundation and has joined us for the meeting to ensure that Butrint's unique treasures will be preserved and protected in an environmentally sound manner as the area around it is being developed for more commercial uses.

Responding to criticisms of the World Bank's previous programs, aimed at large public-works projects that often neglected environmental concerns and the need to bring aid directly to the poor rather than enhancing the private bank accounts of corrupt officials in developing countries, the program for developing Albania's southern coast has been constructed from the grassroots level with continuous discussions with

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local residents and officials prior to preparing a plan to be presented to the nation's governing body. While it includes improving infrastructure, such as roads and highways, it also has built in programs for community involvement including a community owned and operated radio station.

At the same time that external economic support is provided, however, the difficult task of creating the foundations for genuine democratic reform must occur. Isolated by decades of totalitarian and authoritarian regimes, which replaced a feudal clan system of government, Albania became, in some respects, the Tibet of Eastern Europe, a country about which so little was actually known that it became a place for which anything could be imagined. Now, open to the homogenizing effects of globalization, Albania is striving to preserve a cultural heritage that includes a unique dialect and musical system while fostering the foundations of genuine democracy. The tradition of Communist dictatorships, under which the population was forced to work on communal farms and other cooperative endeavors, undermined the impulse toward community effort, and restoring an ethos of voluntary service to the public good among Albania's citizens will be difficult. Discarding the outdated social and political institutions of former regimes and establishing new venues for citizen participation are necessary elements of this process, but forging an authentic democracy and civil society will involve more than that. It will require a transformation of long-standing beliefs and value systems among a populace dominated for so long by authoritarian governments.

Back in Albania's capital, Tirana, there is a sense of frenzied desolation along the kiosks that embellish the streets in front of the austere buildings that house the government's official offices. Yet, in the courtyard of the Hotel Rogner—the home away from home for most of the major media covering the events in Kosovo—I look out upon a garden of dozens of blossoming trees and shrubs that surround a large swimming pool. It reminds me of scenes in Kenya, where I once served with the United Nations, and now, as then, I think about the way in which so many countries that appear to be tropical paradises are abysmal in terms of their records on human rights, a fact that is often overlooked by overzealous environmentalists who sometimes seem to care more about protecting wildlife than about repressive brutalization of the human spirit.

On the plane ride back to the United States, I sit with Fron Nazi, a native Albanian who was founding director of the Soros Foundation in Albania and now has his own consulting firm. We both have our own methods for ending the war in Kosovo. Mine is that loudspeakers should be set up that would play Gabriel Faure's "Requiem," since I believe no amount of hatred, however long-standing and deep, could

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withstand such beauty. Fron's approach is more practical. "Just give them all free tickets to soccer games," he says.

Whether the fragile peace established in Kosovo will endure or not, a human tragedy has already occurred there—the effects of which will remain for some time. Albania, already one of the poorest nations in the world, has had to cope with hundreds of thousands of refugees and was ill-equipped to do so, even with the aid of the United Nations and several international non-profit agencies; and there is another dimension of the conflict that has rarely been mentioned or considered. The children in Kosovo, like those in Bosnia as well as in Africa have seen former neighbors transformed into fierce murderers and have witnessed events that—despite UNICEF's admirable efforts to provide trauma centers for them—they may never be able to forget, nor be able to heal from the psychic wounds that have been inflicted upon them. What sort of world can we expect to exist when these children mature? If the Unabomber's acts of violence can be traced, in part, to flawed bonding with his parental figures, can we hope to believe that children who have endured far worse ordeals will have the equipoise to resolve conflicts peaceably, since they have seen that brute force can conquer all, and we, the inhabitants of the so-called civilized world, stood by with a nihilistic pacifism watching this inhumanity for far too long before coming to their aid?

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SUSAN HAACK

Science, Literature, and the "Literature of Science"

As they investigate how the world is, scientists create an enormously complex labyrinth of signs—of words, chemical formulae, mathematical symbols, computer images, and so forth. And so, noticing that writing plays a significant role in the scientific enterprise, literary scholars and rhetoricians have turned their attention to the "literature of science." But some, unfortunately, have treated science as like imaginative literature, and scientific texts as like literary texts, in ways in which they are *un*like; and this assimilation has tempted some into the kinds of relativist and irrealist extravagances that prompt Max Perutz to protest the whole project of rhetoric of science as "a piece of humbug masquerading as an academic discipline." Perhaps, however, if we were clearer about the differences between science and literature and between scientific and literary texts, we might begin to see what a reasonable rhetoric of science would be, and do.

Scientists engage in writing, and novelists, playwrights, etc., engage in inquiry. But the word "science" picks out a loose federation of kinds of inquiry, while the word "literature" picks out a loose federation of kinds of writing. In its broadest usage, "literature" refers to writing of just about any kind, as when we speak of "keeping up with the literature" on our subject; and the word is also used honorifically, to refer to aesthetically admirable writing on whatever topic. But when, in what follows, I write of "imaginative literature," my main concern will be the differences between science and fiction.

The inquiry in which writers of imaginative literature engage (whether informal observation and pondering over the quirks of human nature, or systematic research into a place or time) is essential to their

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enterprise—*but as a means to the end of writing* edifying, entertaining, provocative, expressive, moving, illuminating. . . novels, plays, etc. And the writing in which scientists engage is essential to their enterprise too—*but as a means to the end of finding out* significant, explanatory truths, well-warranted by evidence, about the world and how it works.

Science, like literature, requires imagination. A scientist imagines structures, classifications, etc., which, if he is successful, are real, and explanations, laws, and theories which, if he is successful, are true. Imagination, and imaginative exploration of imagined potential explanations, is necessary. But to go beyond mere speculation, appraisal of the likely reality or truth of his imaginative creation—itself often requiring imagination in the design of experiments and instruments—is necessary too. "Scientific reasoning," as Peter Medawar once put it, "is a kind of dialogue between the possible and the actual, what might be and what is in fact the case."

A writer of imaginative literature, by contrast, imagines people, events, and stories which, if he is successful, are illuminating about real human beings, real human doings, and real human and moral possibilities. Imagination, and imaginative exploration of imagined scenarios and characters, comes first; and though an author may imaginatively explore linguistic means and modes, and imaginatively "test" his imagined characters and events for believability, also last. It would be more than a little disconcerting for a novelist to discover that characters or events he thought he had imagined were, actually, real—almost, though not quite, as disconcerting as it would be for a scientist to discover that the stuff or phenomenon he had been investigating *isn't* real.

Novels, plays, etc., are often set in real places, and sometimes include real events as well as imaginary ones. Irving Wallace writes in the afterword to *The Prize* that his descriptions of Stockholm and the Nobel ceremonies are factual; however, he continues, "the characters who people these pages. . .are make-believe; and the entire plot [is] purest fabrication. . . .If the characters or situations have. . .any counterparts in real life, the resemblance must be accepted as surprising coincidence." True, a novel may also involve real people, whether overtly acknowledged or more or less thinly disguised. But, except in such an unlikely and disconcerting eventuality as Wallace worries about, the fictional characters and fictional events a novelist creates are not only imaginative but also imaginary. By contrast, the imaginative constructions of science, when they are successful, are precisely *not* imaginary or fictional, but real.

Scientists, like writers, use metaphors. Sometimes a literary metaphor, such as the Red and the Black, is the thread that ties a novel together;

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and sometimes a scientific metaphor, such as the chaperone molecule, parental investment, or the Invisible Hand, is an intellectual tool a scientist uses as he works towards an account of a physical or social structure or kind. Once again, however, it is a case of "both. . . , but ___ ." A subtle literary metaphor will be extended, expanded, explored, but remain a metaphor as an author finds new ways to play on it. (In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Hermia insults Helena: "Thou painted maypole!" and Helena replies in kind: "Get you gone, you dwarf; you minimus, of hindr'ing knot-grass made; you bead, you acorn.") But a sturdy scientific metaphor will be extended, expanded, explored with the ultimate goal of enabling a literally true account of cellular processes, mating behavior, markets, or whatever.

Scientific texts differ from literary texts in ways that reflect the differences between science and imaginative literature. But rather than a single, simple distinction of two kinds of text, there are umpteen distinct but related dimensions on which a text can be located, with scientific texts tending to cluster in one area of the grid, and literary texts in another. A paradigmatic scientific text is putatively truth-stating; putatively referential; about stuff, things, and events in the natural world or, quite often, artifacts created by scientific activity; evidence-presenting; aimed at an audience of other scientists; and written in a direct, explicit, dry, closed style. A paradigmatic literary text is unlike a paradigmatic scientific text in just about all these ways. Other kinds of text, from fax machine activity reports to the Book of Common Prayer, are like the paradigmatic scientific text in some ways, unlike it in others; like the paradigmatic literary text in some ways, unlike it in others; like each other in some ways, unlike each other in other ways.

I say "putatively truth-stating," rather than simply "truth-stating," to include texts which state what the author takes to be truths, but are in fact falsehoods. But I mean to exclude fraudulent scientific texts, where, feigning a truth-stating intention, the author presents as true what he knows or believes to be false. Crick and Watson's famous paper describing the structure of DNA is, I take it, truth-stating, while Benveniste's notorious paper describing the effect of high-dilution homeopathic remedies is falsehood-stating; whether Benveniste's paper is really putatively truth-stating, or only faking it, depends on whether he is sincerely self-deceived or knowingly deceptive.

But don't works of imaginative literature teach us truths? Among other things, of course, yes; novels, plays, etc., can convey truths, or sometimes falsehoods, about what makes real human beings tick. And doesn't that mean they too must be putatively truth-stating? No; a novel

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doesn't convey the truths (or falsehoods) it conveys by stating them, but by making statements which, being about fictional characters, are *not* true.

Though it would take a whole other paper to unpack that "conveys," an example will illustrate the idea. Alison Lurie's novel, *Imaginary Friends*, conveys without stating some of the same truths that Leon Festinger's studies of cognitive dissonance convey by stating. Festinger describes experiments and social-scientific studies of people's reactions to inconsistency or "dissonance" in their beliefs, or between their beliefs and their attitudes; predicting, *inter alia*, that if their prophesies are falsified, members of millennial sects won't give them up, but will reinterpret them, and/or start proselytizing more energetically. Lurie tells the story of two sociologists who pretend to join the spiritualist sect they are studying, and, with the others, wait for Ro of Varna to come to earth in his spaceship as the Message promised. When, apparently, nothing happens, the real members of the sect don't lose faith; Ro *has* come, his spirit has entered one of them. Which one?—the senior sociologist, who soon starts to believe it himself, and by the time the novel ends is off his head entirely.

A novelist, I shall say (using "pretending," as distinct from "feigning," to mark the difference between fiction and fraud), pretends to refer, pretends to state truths, but with no intent to deceive his readers. As this reveals, the possibility of fictional pretended-reference is parasitic on the practice of regular reference to real people, events, etc., and the practice of truth-conveying on the practice of truth-stating.

The truths that works of literature convey aren't peculiar literary truths, but regular truths, sometimes as startlingly familiar as the truths about *homo academicus* that Malcolm Bradbury conveys in *Stepping Westward* about James Walker and his colleagues at Benedict Arnold College, or David Lodge in *Changing Places* about Morris Zapp and his colleagues at Euphoric State and the University of Rummidge. Perhaps there are moods that can only be evoked or emotions that can only be expressed by obliquely literary means; but there are no truths that can be fictionally conveyed but cannot, even in principle, even at clumsy length, be stated. Here I'm with Frank Ramsey: "If you can't say it, you can't say it, and you can't whistle it, either"; which, however, is by no means to say that all truths fall within the scope of the sciences to discover.

As everyone knows whose first chemistry lesson, like mine, was devoted to the use of the passive voice, a studiedly neutral "style of no style" has become the norm in scientific writing. Insofar as the goal is

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to inform other inquirers as efficiently as possible, it is appropriate to give the highest priority to the explicit, the literal, the cognitive, the direct. Fancy literary forms would get in the way; imagine how much harder it would have been if Crick and Watson had tried to explain the structure of DNA in iambic pentameter. No, I haven't forgotten Lucretius's scientific poem, *De Rerum Natura*—recently in a new English translation in iambic pentameter, yet! But I stick to my guns: the science Lucretius presents simply isn't comparable in complexity or sophistication; and if it had been, the literary form would have been a serious obstacle to communication.

A series of experiments in mutagenesis were known in the trade as the "Uncles-and-Aunts" experiments, because the relation involved was one up and sideways; but they also had an official, less jokey, and more informative description: *tests of the triplet code by means of frame-shift mutants in bacteriophage T4*. Still, there is a large element of convention in the stiff style and toneless tone of much official scientific writing, which serves in part as a badge of respectability, and can sometimes be a substitute for genuine rigor—a ubiquitous problem where social-scientific writing is concerned, and perhaps not entirely insignificant even in the natural sciences.

Sometimes there is a mismatch between the purpose of a text and its style. When a work of imaginative literature conveys the truths it wants to get across a bit too obtrusively directly, we may criticize it as "didactic." In *The Ragged-Trousered Philanthropists*, Robert Tressell allows his hero to make chapter-long socialist speeches; names his fictional employers "Sweater," "Grinder," and "Didlum"; and makes one of his ministers a Mr. Bosher, while the other, Mr. Belcher, dies when his internal gases finally explode!

Similarly, when we describe a scientific article as "rhetorical," it is usually a criticism of a different but related kind of mismatch. We expect a scientist, in his professional writings, to tell us what he takes to be the truth of the matter he has been investigating, and to present the evidence that this is how things are. But, though a dubious or lazy scientist wanting to persuade others of the *bona fides* of his work may occasionally succeed by means of rhetorical flourishes, another and perhaps more effective strategy is to hide behind that blandly neutral official style. If it weren't for one line about how a "solution" so dilute that it contains not a single molecule of the supposed "solute" works because *the water remembers* that it once contained bee venom, a careless or inexpert reader would hardly notice anything untoward about that article of Benveniste's.

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WHAT, THEN, MIGHT a reasonable rhetoric of science be?—A very different enterprise, certainly, from John Limon's study of "*The Double Helix* as Literature," playing with the conceit of Crick and Watson as a "base pair" and searching the text for evidence of a sexual relationship between them; or S. Michael Halloran's efforts to show that Crick and Watson kicked off a revolution in molecular biology because of their rhetorical daring, using "we" instead of the passive voice, and describing their structure for DNA as "of considerable biological interest"; or Alan Gross's suggestion that the idea that there is such a molecule as DNA is just an illusion created by the words, pictures, and diagrams in Crick and Watson's papers. A reasonable rhetoric of science, sensitive to the differences between different kinds of text, the relativity of style to purpose and audience, the evolution of scientific language with the growth of scientific knowledge, and to scientific communication as pooling of evidence, could make a contribution—a small contribution, but useful nonetheless—to our understanding of the scientific enterprise.

As articles, presentations, textbooks, etc., aim to communicate results, the ideal is that the degree of credence given a claim in the relevant sub-community depend on the quality of the evidence it has, for transmission of information within the community to maximize epistemological efficiency. Of course, successful transmission of results depends on the audience as well as on the presenter: think of Nirenberg's paper on the coding problem, making almost no impression on the small, sleepy audience at its first reading, but electrifying an audience of hundreds when Crick arranged for it to be read a second time, on the last day of the same conference.

There is a real distinction between modes of communication that promote the epistemically desirable correlation, and those that impede it, illustrated by the contrast between these scenarios: (1) a scientific claim comes to be accepted within the relevant sub-community because strong evidence is clearly communicated in a journal article or conference presentation; (2) a scientific claim comes to be accepted in the absence of good evidence because it is promoted by means of emotive language, snazzy metaphors, or glossy photographs, melodramatic press conferences, etc. But in practice there is rarely such a clean division of cases; and the usual way of drawing the distinction—"mere rhetoric," on the one hand, versus "logic," on the other—leaves a lot to be desired.

For example, casting aspersions on one's opponents' competence, which at first sounds definitely in the epistemically inefficient category,

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can't automatically be classified with mere name-calling; for warrant depends in part on each scientist's grounds for assuming the competence of the others on whose work he depends—a thought that put me in mind of the trouble I sometimes get myself into when I take up an airline magazine crossword where the passenger before me left off. Nor is clear presentation of evidence very aptly described as "logic," for formal-logical cogency, though necessary, is not sufficient. Not only does evidence ramify in all directions in a structure more like a crossword puzzle than a logical proof, but—the point that will most interest the serious student of scientific language—supportiveness of evidence is vocabulary-sensitive.

Scientific inquiry is hampered without good terminology, and good scientific terminology is itself an achievement of inquiry, dense with theory: a non-proteinaceous substance in the nucleus of cells is dubbed "nuclein," and later comes to be known as "nucleic acid"; then "desoxyribose nucleic acid," later called "deoxyribose nucleic acid," then "deoxyribonucleic acid," or just plain "DNA," is identified; then "pentose nucleic acid" is specified as "ribose nucleic acid," then "ribonucleic acid," subsequently acknowledged to be acids, in the plural, and to be found mostly not in the nucleus but in the cytoplasm; and then, almost a century after "nuclein" was coined, we had "transfer RNA," "messenger RNA," and so on.

Since theory is fallible, scientific terminology may be bad as well as good, and sometimes fails to pick out anything real. As theories are modified, meanings will shift, and translation of a later theory into the vocabulary of an earlier one may be possible only by way of clumsy circumlocution. This argues in favor of a modest form of what philosophers of scientific language call the "meaning-variance thesis," but offers no encouragement to the idea that supposedly rival theories are invariably incommensurable.

Scientific metaphors run the gamut from merely picturesque speech to serious speculative instrument. The cognitive usefulness of those serious metaphors, in scientific inquiry as elsewhere, is to direct speculation into new avenues; their worth, therefore, depends on the fruitfulness of the intellectual territory to which those avenues lead. Some scientific metaphors call on familiar social phenomena; but my reasonable rhetorician will resist the temptation to judge their worth by reference to the desirability or otherwise of the social phenomenon in question. If, for example, he takes an interest in Hamilton's metaphor of parental investment—described by Trivers as "the most important advance in evolutionary theory since the work of Charles Darwin and Gregor

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Mendel"—he will be less interested in the merits of capitalism than in how the metaphor is cashed out (sorry!) in literal terms, and how well the resulting account stands up.

"How well" implies, as it is meant to, that a metaphor may be a good guide, or a poor one. Unlike the radical rhetoric of science that Perutz protests, a reasonable rhetoric of science would acknowledge that rationality can work through epistemically efficient transmission of information, *or* be hampered by epistemically inefficient transmission; that scientific terms may take on information, *or* misinformation, and sometimes—most often in the social sciences, but not only there—evaluative coloration; and so on. For science is neither sacred nor a confidence trick, but a thoroughly human enterprise: ragged and uneven, fallible and imperfect, but for all that, remarkably successful, as human enterprises go.

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Born Again

THE HUMAN STAIN. **By Philip Roth.** Houghton Mifflin Co. $26.00.

PHILIP ROTH'S LATEST NOVEL, *The Human Stain*, forms the third, and perhaps concluding, volume of his recent "historical" novels or chronicles (*American Pastoral* [1997] and *I Married a Communist* [1998]), while at the same time harking back to his great novella *The Ghost Writer*, published twenty years ago. All of these books are narrated by Nathan Zuckerman. In *The Ghost Writer* Zuckerman is a wide-eyed twenty-three-year-old writer, flush with his first success, on something of a pilgrimage to the New England backwoods (actually, the Berkshires) where in ascetic isolation his aesthetic father E. I. Lonoff has settled.

Now, in *The Human Stain*, Zuckerman has out-Lonoffed Lonoff. He has learned altogether too much about the writer's life and is happily launched into self-imposed exile in, yes, the Berkshires; aging, incontinent, impotent, living in a two-room cabin sans prostate, women, gerbils, dogs, or cats, having arrived at last at a spareness that Lonoff himself could have envied.

As a kind of monk, Zuckerman is hardly an actor at all in the drama of the novel but rather a rapt listener to the stories of others, in particular to the story of his neighbor Coleman Silk, the long-time reforming dean of nearby Athena College. Silk, someone with whom Zuckerman has previously had no more than a nodding acquaintance, one day shows up on Zuckerman's doorstep and insists that he write the story of his (Silk's) career, which the dean himself has been trying to write without success, under the title *Spooks*. It turns out that, besides Lonoff, Silk has been the only other Jew on the Athena faculty and the only Jewish dean of faculty in the college's history. His reforming days abruptly ended by the departure of the college's president for a bigger job at a more imposing school, Silk returns to the faculty after sixteen years out of the classroom as something of an anachronism (that is, as a humanist), and soon enough his return explodes into scandal when he asks out loud about two students who have never showed up for his classics class—"Do they exist or are they spooks?" The two absent students, it appears, are black; Silk is accused of racism; foe and friend on the faculty wash their hands of him; in the fierce craziness that ensues, Silk's wife dies—"*They* killed her!" Silk rages. . . .You get the picture.

But in one of a number of wicked twists in the novel, Zuckerman discovers that Silk has a secret that puts everything in his story in an

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altogether different light, in fact that Silk has more than one secret. In fact, each of the novel's characters harbors a secret, some more or less banal, but some of the kind that go to the very heart of identity.

A digression: The jacket of my copy of Roth's second book, *Letting Go*, carries on the back a picture of him that, when I first saw it (in 1962!), produced in me a happy but also envious wave of emotion. A meticulously trim and neat—and ridiculously young—Roth is sitting in a rocker facing the camera. He has on a short-sleeve shirt open at the neck, chinos, and what used to be called, before the age of Nike, tennis shoes. On a low table beside him is what seems to be a board game, the name of which you can make out to be Gettysburg.

So what's to be so emotional about? That the guy—this Jewish boy from Jersey—could be so palpably, photogenically American, so at ease in that New Englandy rocker, so relaxed about claiming the culture (Gettysburg) for himself, so on top of *goyishe* informality, and yet—as the sneakers seemed to say in particular—so much, so simply, so autonomously, so *already* himself! That the guy seemed—to me, an immigrant survivor of the Holocaust with a new Americanized family name—to have beautifully, easefully overcome all the thorns and messes of having to pass. The autonomy was a heady thing to smile about; the sense of feeling at home a thing to envy.

Coleman Silk's big secret—kept from his wife of forty years, from his children, from everyone—is that he's black, that he's passed as a white man from the day he signed up for the Navy in the Second World War. He has another secret too—that, two years after the scandalous close of his career and two years after the death of his wife, he's having an affair with an illiterate thirty-four-year-old cleaning woman, called Faunia Farley, who works at the college. He has received an anonymous, ominous letter saying that "Everyone knows" of his affair, a letter that, as we discover, has been sent in tortured secrecy by the young new chair of Silk's department, Delphine Roux, herself secretly. . . .

And so it goes. Some of these secrets are of a wholly different order than others, but in all they bring to mind the importance of big secrets to the modern novel—Rochester's Bertha, Pip's Magwitch, Gatsby's money—there's a very long list, including of course a great many famous illicit affairs in addition to Madame Bovary's. These secrets seem inescapable parts of modern life, inescapable for all of "us" who for whatever reason have been cut loose from our origins and set out to wend our ways towards identity under circumstances of dizzying, bewildering, irresistibly tempting, and often damned scary possibility.

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For a long time the American take on this trajectory between past and present, this modern pilgrim's progress, was captured in the hopeful (albeit slightly uncomfortable) metaphor of "the melting pot." People from all over came to the United States and were dissolved and reconstituted into a new whole. Where once identity was almost altogether determined by place of birth, caste, class, religion, race—now it would be determined by the activity of the self (and if you were born in the States, a kind of analogous internal emigration and immigration was assumed). Although this was a supremely secular and thoroughly social matter, it was also, as emphatically, an existential one. Where once you were promised a soul's due in the afterlife while you were hobbled on earth with identities which seemed to embrace everything except your self, now you could at last live a life that joined self and soul. This was the American adventure.

Milan Kundera has said about Roth that his "nostalgia" for his parents' world—the lost world of the upstanding American—has imparted to his work "not only an aura of tenderness but an entire novelistic background." In Roth's recent books this background has become foreground; maybe it always was the foreground, that is, the location for the main line of exploration in Roth's work, which is the exploration of the conditions of freedom (not liberation, but freedom) in the American melting pot.

In a book full of subtle and definitive reproach to the currently dominant view of America as a "multicultural" collection of unhappily contiguous nationalisms, and in a book that also, incidentally, makes several bows to Faulkner, Roth invents for Silk a wonderfully diverse, mixed up, miscegenated American lineage: Silk learns from his mother that his family (and his Jersey black community) are

> descendants of the Indian from the large Lenape settlement at Indian Fields who married a Swede. . .descendants of the two mulatto brothers brought from the West Indies. . .of the two Dutch sisters come from Holland to become their wives. . .of John Fenwick, an English baronet's son. . .[of Fenwick's daughter], Elizabeth Adams, who married a colored man, Gould. . . .

Silk sees even this past as something to be honored, rather than worshipped—"To hell with that imprisonment!" he says. Instead, Silk opts "to pass," chooses in other words the path of radical autonomy that, Roth maintains, is the fabulous fate of the American, especially

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in the modern era. *This* is the hand we've been dealt, and anything else is an evasion and a lie—

> As though the battle that is each person's singular battle could somehow be abjured, as though voluntarily one could pick up and leave off being one's self, the characteristic, immutable self in whose behalf the battle is undertaken in the first place.

This "singular battle" is, as I read it, what Roth's fiction has been "about" from the beginning. Not that this singular battle isn't muddled and often made more dangerous by one's own hang-ups, which are fairly likely to include ethnicity, family, the works, and about which Roth has written with humor and fire and really like no one else. And not that this singular battle can be waged in exile from the hangups of the people around you, to which Roth has also paid a lot of attention. But the essential step to maturity, Roth seems to say right from the start, lies in accepting the radical autonomy that, in modern America, *is* the way we live, and that anyway is ultimately and inescapably the ground we stand on in the existential "battle" of being. In *The Human Stain*, through Coleman and Faunia's relationship, Roth delicately, I am tempted to say sweetly shows the purpose of the battle, if I can put it this way, to be the affirmation or better the realization of being, of being pure and simple, the humanist's "goal" for the examined life. And if that seems paradoxically unintellectual, it's no more paradoxical than, as Montaigne says, that you need a good deal of knowledge and in particular self-knowledge to understand that you don't know anything.

The last third of the novel occupies itself less with Coleman and Faunia than with the imagination—this is, after all, a Zuckerman novel. I want, in closing, to say two things about Zuckerman's imagining. First, that it is rendered, sentence by sentence, in an absolutely beautiful American prose—vulgar and sacred, utterly colloquial (no one has a better ear for talk than Roth) and gracefully intellectual, mundane and eloquent, slapstick and high-toned, ethnic and "standard," street-smart and book-wise. A prose of great verve, intelligence, and suppleness, it's precisely the melting pot become writing—which, in Roth's hands anyway, is just a great pleasure to read. The second point I want to make has to do with "what happens," in Zuckerman's words, "when you write books," with Zuckerman as author. "There's not just something that drives you to find out everything," Zuckerman says, but "something begins putting everything in your path. There is suddenly no such thing as a back road that doesn't lead headlong into your obsession."

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In *The Human Stain* Zuckerman doesn't rant, rave, and rage, and he doesn't stumble into too many wacky situations. But he's still driven by his writerly obsession, he still can't let things go when he thinks, as he does when everyone else is comfortable to close the book on Coleman and Faunia's story, that that just "would not suffice. Too much truth was still concealed." Zuckerman goes on to say "there really is no bottom to what is not known. The truth about us is endless. As are the lies." But, even believing that what there is to say about us is endless, Zuckerman nonetheless—in the search for this slippery, *human* truth—continues to violate decorum, to drive down the dangerous back roads, to do things no sane person would dream of doing in real life. So it is *through imagination* that, in a world of radical autonomy, we seek truth: this is the thing, this obsessiveness, that Zuckerman holds in reverence. *The Human Stain* suggests that this might be the last of Zuckerman, which maybe sharpens one's appreciation of Zuckerman's obsessiveness as an especially apt and daring form of sustained moral meditation. From *that* point of view alone, we are going to be a lot poorer if, in fact, Zuckerman is about to be retired.

Igor Webb

A Critic in the Making

THE HAROLD LETTERS, 1928–1943: THE MAKING OF AN AMERICAN INTELLECTUAL. **By Clement Greenberg.** Edited by Janice Van Horne. Counterpoint. $27.50.

WHAT MAKES CLEM'S LETTERS so good? It's because he doesn't try to look good. He writes it as he feels it: embarrassingly honest, at times shameless. Tail between his legs, he lets us in on his restlessness, torpor, depression, his guilt and enlightenment. The weather, his mood, his feelings dominate. These letters cover his formative years, taking us into his major stride as critic—documented in letters, yet at times unfolding as in a novel. Early on, we catch the real Clem: questioning, judgmental, advice-giving, funny, and ready to be surprised.

Harold Lazarus was a college mate, Clem's confidant and sidekick. Part of the time Harold appears as a victim of the correspondence; Clem gives him what for or advice, or prods him, telling him how to write, how to free himself. He urges him to share certain books, recordings, and

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films. He even asks Harold to find him a lawyer of the right kind who can handle things vis-à-vis his former wife Toady, for the sake of his son, Danny. The letters provide a necessary diary for Clem; Harold gives some kind of echo, or leash—or silence—on which Clem can bounce back on *himself.* These are youthful years and very touching. Clem reveals his loneliness, often his confusion; his terrible self-depreciation as well as ambition and self-confidence. Someplace he feels and knows he is the best.

His appetites never dwindle. He reads everything (in any of several languages), and searches out concerts, exhibitions, theater, films. Harold was the recipient of Clem's considered opinions—Marianne Moore, W. H. Auden, Edmund Wilson, Mary McCarthy, Margaret Marshall (of *The Nation*, for which Clem wrote reviews regularly) all get a going-over. Yet from the beginning, he strives to be a poet. One can see him flowering into the prewar/wartime intellectual world. Along the way, we are occasionally given a look at many of his sketches, and eventually learn of his discovery of the joy of painting. He really *listened* to music, really *stared* at paintings and knew when he was deeply moved. Once moved, he was confident enough to pontificate! As he searched for the truth around him he openly gives us, through Harold, the truth about himself.

Clem's curiosity stretches all over—he engages people, sizes them up and then, often disappointed, discards or exposes them (follow his relations with Harold Rosenberg, Lionel Abel, etc.). As for his love life, it was pretty messy. His marriage to Toady dissolves before Danny's birth. (The boy is soon, in turn, abandoned by his mother who left him to be fostered by her own disturbed mother.) While he writes a good line about his desperate longing to see the child, it hardly ever comes to fruition. He counts on occasional photographs and then moans to Harold his hopes and verdicts for Danny. Over the years we follow Clem's descriptions of Danny's plight and doomed future. This is no moral scene.

Clem describes his yearning for glamour and society. Jeanie Connolly fills the bill, almost the apotheosis of international high life in the intellectual world. Before she leaves London for New York, her husband, Cyril Connolly (editor of *Horizon*), suggests that she contact Clem, the result of which is a long, hot love affair. When Jeanie and Clem are not in bed they are part of an active social life that includes some of the kingpins (and their satellites) of the international literary and art worlds. The nucleus included the ever-forming *Partisan Review* crowd, with all its side-taking intramural webs.

For postwar babies, the picture of Clem's intellectual, political, and financial life (what a dollar could buy!) during the 1930s and 1940s is fascinating. He rejected Stalinism, embraced socialism, and

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reported on how sides were taken, arranged, and rearranged among the intellectuals.

Clem is drawn to and yet often seems to despise "Wasps," "gentiles," "Yids," and "fairies." He appraises them and knows that all good things in the end are Jewish, Yiddish. He occasionally delivers his asides on sex in general and homosexuality, making blanket statements on the nature of the beast—in this case the beast is often Clem. Despite their disagreements, Clem was "true" to his own family—to Pa, his brothers Sol and Marty, and even his nubile stepsister, Natalie. There's both a certain respect and loathing for the whole bunch which comes through lovingly.

Janice Van Horne, Clem's widow, has created a little treasure in these letters. Her notes make the connection that really glue the book together. Her appendix is thorough and to the point; even including some of Clem's poems and letters from Harold. A difficult book to bring off; original in every way.

What makes *The Harold Letters* so appealing is how fresh the letters are—the starkness of Clem trying to look at himself honestly. He lays out his life signature in these fifteen years. The letters are vividly personal, yet often universal. Good letters can turn secrets and privacy inside out. Censorless, he calls it as he sees it, Clem-style. Feeling is all.

Helen Frankenthaler

A Poet's Poet

FORMS OF HOPE. ESSAYS BY TOMAS VENCLOVA. Sheep Meadow Press. $29.95.

FOR TOMAS VENCLOVA, writing poems has always been a conversation "with the emptiness, or perhaps the higher power, which we find inside ourselves in moments of despair and which sends us the angel called the gift of speech." Literature, especially poetry, he believes, is an uncertain, complex affair, an intimate reckoning and exercising with one's moral and artistic conscience. In his penetrating essays here on Ilya Ehrenburg, and Russian poets Andrei Voznesensky and Yevgeny Yevtushenko, Venclova deftly illustrates how moral compromise has led, inexorably and inevitably, to artistic compromise.

Widely considered to be Lithuania's greatest poet, Venclova is, as Joseph Brodsky points out in his introduction to Venclova's *Winter*

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Dialogue, a poet who "has absorbed all the best to be found in the neighboring territories," that is, Russia and Poland. Born in the town of Kleipeda in 1937, Venclova left Lithuania in 1977 certain he would never be able to return. Many Lithuanians of his generation regarded "Moscow" with a sense of enmity; Venclova, now a professor of Slavic languages and literatures at Yale, saw it as miserable but "oddly splendid, the city of Pasternak, Solzhenitsyn, and Sakharov." While Brodsky claims that Venclova's biography provides few, if any, insights into his poetry, the Baltic landscape that shaped Venclova's life is precisely the territory he excavates in *Forms of Hope*'s first eight essays, grouped under the rubric of "Politics."

Writing admiringly of Czeslaw Milosz, Venclova explains that a poet's task is to create poetry "adequate both for the disasters which are destroying culture and for that striking strength of cultures to survive. It can be written only with a living sympathy for the cultures, and it is inseparable from a living sympathy for people." Like Milosz, who also came from the town the Lithuanians call Vilnius, the Poles call Wilno, and the Russians call Vilna, Venclova remains haunted by the city of his youth, the focus of several of his most poignant essays. In the invaluable, oft-reprinted 1979 epistolary exchange between these Polish and Lithuanian poets (*Cross-currents*, Milosz's *Beginning With My Streets*, and Venclova's *Winter Dialogue*), who graduated from the same university a quarter century apart, Venclova offers a pithy but compelling tale of his own early biography woven together with a fascinating history of Vilnius, described by Milosz as "a city of clouds resembling baroque architecture and of baroque architecture like coagulated clouds." Venclova reminds Milosz that for the Poles, Wilno was an important but provincial cultural center on its eastern border, but for Lithuanians it has served, Jerusalem-like, as a symbol of continuity and historical identity. "Lithuania without Vilnius is an ephemeral nation, but with Vilnius its past and its historical responsibility are secured."

Venclova's masterful analyses of the moral and artistic responses of writers to totalitarianism exhibit the same formidable intelligence and sensitivity deployed in his biography of the Polish writer Aleksander Wat (*Life and Art of an Iconoclast*). In an impassioned review of John and Carol Garrard's *Inside the Soviet Writers' Union*, Venclova notes how what the Garrards dubbed this "bizarre world of privilege and menace," where writers were expected to eulogize the status quo, not only blurred the border between writers and apparatchiks but produced cronyism, corruption, and provincialism, "a flood of mediocrities that virtually submerged one of the leading literatures of the world."

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During the purges of the late 1930s, the Soviet Writers' Union became an agency of Stalin's Terror against its own members. "In those days," he writes,

> the occupational hazards of writers were much greater than the occupational hazards of flying planes or climbing mountains. Nothing similar had ever happened in the history of world culture. As a result, the Russian and Soviet literary scene remains a disaster area, a cultural Chernobyl, a field inhabited by surviving mutants and by several incredibly tough men and women who withstood the poisoning against all the odds.

He recalls in the late 1950s (dubbed the pre-Gutenberg period by poet Anna Akhmatova) the thrill of discovering and memorizing samizdat copies of Marina Tsvetaeva's poems, full of mistakes and blank spaces, "compressed and intense to the uttermost limit, and sometimes it exceeded all limits." While pointing out the "unusual" nature of most Russian lives of her time, Venclova notes Tsvetaeva's biography "was something like an adventure novel that grew into a classical tragedy. . . . She would have been a sort of Russian Virginia Woolf—if the Revolution which she expected and called for in her youth, had not taken place."

Tsvetaeva, he writes, believed a poet's calling was "to live more intensely than others, as though for and beyond everyone, for the expiation of all." Her experience leads him to speculate if there is perhaps a profound connection between the demands of language and the demands of ethics. "True contemporaneity," Venclova explains, "which is the same thing as true immortality, can be achieved either by obeying the command of one's time or by rejecting it and becoming the antidote to an era. Tsvetaeva did both."

Two Russian poets come in for rather less adulatory treatment than Tsvetaeva, Brodsky, Milosz, and Pasternak, whom Venclova feels belongs in the company of Pushkin and Shakespeare. Agreeing with critic Stanislaw Baranczak that the case of Russian poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko is "among the top ten hoaxes of the twentieth century," Venclova (in 1991) rails against Yevtushenko's "fatal half measures, fatal half truths," explaining that the poet strives to improve his fatherland without rejecting the main part of the ideology that makes such a project hopeless. "In this way, he is the counterpart of his presumably avid reader Gorbachev. Both attempt to promote something like totalitarianism with a human face. It never worked. It never will."

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Venclova sees the Russian poet Andrei Voznesensky as a philistine pretending to be an anti-philistine, who tries to impress readers by his boldness and profundity while offering pompous platitudes, "moral recipes of the Ann Landers type" and worst of all, *poshlost*, "an aggressive and pretentious sort of banality and triteness."

Venclova's essay on Joshua Rubenstein's *Tangled Loyalties: The Life and Times of Ilya Ehrenburg* examines the "bizarre destiny" of this Soviet writer, "a decoy for the dictator," whose life was repeatedly tainted by moral compromise; he was also the first person, in 1921, who managed to emigrate from the Soviet Union legally. Venclova sees Ehrenburg as his own best censor, whose ellipses were sometimes worse than lies, an intermediary between Russia's past and Russia's present, who served the system but was somewhat exempt from its iron rules. "Born to survive," Ehrenburg, to Venclova, was "the very embodiment of the slippery and shadowy post-Stalin period known as the thaw," a term Ehrenburg coined in his novel (*The Thaw*) about the early political and cultural stirrings after Stalin's death. Venclova feels that while Ehrenburg attempted to manipulated the regime, it was he whom the regime successfully manipulated by rewarding him for his compromises.

The primary purpose of verse, Venclova believes, is to overcome despair, "to be victorious over entropy." The writers Venclova admires have inspired hope by preserving their spiritual and intellectual integrity, inevitably going against the common opinion of their times. To Venclova, "that is what writing is all about."

Susan Miron

The Social Construction Blues

THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF WHAT? **By Ian Hacking.** Harvard University Press. $29.95.

MYSTERY OF MYSTERIES: IS EVOLUTION A SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION? **By Michael Ruse.** Harvard University Press. $27.50.

LET ME BEGIN WITH A CONFESSION: I am one of those old-fashioned sorts who associates the scientific method with scrupulously objective observation, the rigorous testing of hypotheses, and explanations of the natural world that are as precise (and, yes, *true*) as they are often poetic. No doubt my admiration for scientists who engage in the slow,

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demanding work of laboratory experimentation springs from a sense (confirmed by a wide range of teachers) that I possessed a world-class math block, and that I would not likely push the scientific envelope one smidgen. Add the unhappy fact that I happen to be a diabetic and you can easily see how it is that I cheer, positively cheer, any researcher hard at work on a cure for what ails me.

I take a measure of solace, however, in reminding myself that many combatants in the science wars know even less about hands-on science than I do. Small wonder, then, that genuine scientists, the ones who work with Bunsen burners and chalk up on the blackboards, often regard the culture studies crowd with such contempt. That's where I may have something of an advantage because the same attacks now being mounted on scientific authority are old hat to those of us in literary studies who watched our discipline become systematically destabilized. Bashing Shakespeare, either as Exhibit A in the hegemony of dead, white, European writers or, more recently, as an apologist of empire, became a way to ask, again and again, questions beginning with *whose*: Whose greatness? Whose excellence? And most important of all, whose interest is being served? Dressed up in the impenetrable language that may well be postmodernism's defining feature, the agendas of identity politics rolled over those who talked about novels and poems (rather than "texts") and who believed, on aesthetic grounds, that some books were better than others. Such innocents often found themselves contemptuously dismissed as under-theorized, or worse.

As someone who has suffered these slings, these arrows, I know full well how cultural warfare works—and also how a spongy term such as "social construction" can easily be applied to everything from authorship to Zulu nationalism. That's why Ian Hacking's *The Social Construction of What?* is such a gratifying book. It covers a wide range of clashes about everything from how best to treat mental illness, child abuse, or anorexia, to the current research being done in sedimentary geology—and always with an eye on the specific "what" in question. My hunch is that Hacking has little patience with much that currently travels under the wide umbrella of social construction ("both obscure and overused," he snorts), but also that he recognizes useful thinking when he sees it:

> Social construction has in many contexts been a truly liberating idea, but that which on first hearing has liberated some has made all too many others smug, comfortable, and trendy in ways that have become merely orthodox. The phrase has become a code. If

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> you use it favorably, you deem yourself rather radical. If you trash the phrase, you declare that you are rational, reasonable, and respectable.

Given the vitriol on both sides of the science wars, Hacking serves a valuable function by explaining, in language as clear as it is smart, what noncombatants in the science wars need to know. Here, for example, is what he has to say about socially constructed anorexia:

> Unfortunately, social construction analyses do not always liberate. Take anorexia, the disorder of adolescent girls and young women who seem to value being thin above all else. They simply will not eat. Although anorexia has been known in the past, and even the name is a couple of hundred years old, it surfaced in the modern world in the early 1960s. The young women who are seriously affected [their exact numbers are currently a subject of hot debate] resist treatment. Any number of fashionable and often horrible cures have been tried, and none works reliably. In any intuitive understanding of "social construction," anorexia must in part be some sort of social construction. It is at any rate a transient mental illness, flourishing only in some places at some times. But that does not help the girls and young women who are suffering. Social construction theses are liberating chiefly for those who are on the way to being liberated—mothers whose consciousness has already been raised, for example.

Since Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckman published the first study to use "social construction" in its title (*The Social Construction of Reality*, 1966), we have been awash with imitators. Most of them concentrate on the "how it is" that our consciousness has been changed, and always, we are told, for the good. By contrast, the *what* that so interests Hacking hardly matters. Even fundamental physics is not immune in an age when some argue that scientific results, like everything else, are social constructs rather than discoveries about our world that hold independently of society.

We think of this fundamental debate separating social constructivists from objectively grounded scientists as yet another aggravating feature of postmodernism, but in fact it is quite old. In 1898, long before the term "social construction" was coined, Edwin J. Goodwin, an Indiana legislator, proposed a bill that would make $\pi = 3.2$—and furthermore, that people using his "New Mathematical Truth" be required to cough up royalties. The scheme, part of other misguided efforts at the time to

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"square the circle," was eventually defeated. But it's not hard to imagine other, equally daffy efforts to have a social tail wag the scientific dog. Who, after all, would be surprised if a contemporary version of Goodwin proposed that π get rounded off to 3.0 rather than its more cumbersome 3.14 ∞? My imaginary politician might argue that, with enough votes, the natural order could be changed—and in ways that would certainly please the lazier students of his state.

Unfortunately, there would be other, unforeseen consequences as well. Many more scientifically minded folk were quick to point out that nobody would want to stand near buildings designed by an architect who used a 3.0 π (or a 3.2 one, for that matter) in his calculations—and this is especially true for structures sporting domed roofs. Unfortunately, the sort of fuzzy thinking that once turned charlatans into objects of derision is now taken very seriously indeed.

Flash forward to Alan D. Sokal's wickedly delicious 1996 parody of theory-heavy science. His essay was a torpedo below the water line, a deadpanned way of holding pretentious lingo and vacuous ideas up to ridicule. It demonstrated, as no "straight" account ever could, just how much nonsense was passing itself off as cutting-edge thought. Sokal's jawbreaking title, "Toward a Transformative Hermeneutics of Quantum Gravity," should have been enough to tip off the editors of *Social Text*, but given their preference for airy postmodernist theorizing, it is hardly surprising that they accepted his tangled arguments about the social construction of gravity. Peel away phrases such as "privileged epistemological status" or "oppositional discourse," and copious footnotes to the likes of Jacques Derrida, Jacques Lacan, or Luce Irigaray, and what one discovers is that gravity has a strong social component. Indeed, what Sokal proposes (with tongue lodged firmly in his cheek) is that gravity can operate quite differently in New York City than it does in San Francisco—depending, of course, on how the respective citizens decided this matter at the ballot box.

Sokal, you will remember, brought his 1996 hoax to the attention of *Lingua Franca*, a journal that enjoys nothing more than a juicy academic scoop, and the rest, as they say, is history. The wire services jumped on the story and in short order *Social Text* became a national laughingstock. Not even the intellectually playful Stanley Fish was able to provide effective damage control—although he made a pinch-faced effort in a *New York Times* op-ed piece that scolded Sokal for "bad faith" and other crimes against the scientific community. But Fish's sophistry didn't wash—not for scientists pursuing the truth about how our world works, and certainly not for those who had long regarded postmodernist theo-

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rists as self-proclaimed emperors parading around without clothes.

I mention the much-aired Sokal hoax not only because Ian Hacking and Michael Ruse give it significant attention in their respective books but also because the flap itself sets the framework for what might be called "Social Construction: Round II." For Hacking, what matters most in the talk, pro and con, about social construction is the *what* at the immediate issue. Is it facts or gender, quirks or reality? Is it a person, an object, or an idea? Ruse puts it a slightly different way when he proposes that we may have been asking the wrong questions all along, and that, rightly seen, what we have is a situation in which both camps can mount strong arguments:

> Our ultimate concern [Ruse argues] is surely with the issue of realism. Does an objective "real world" exist "out there" that can be known through the methods of science, or is science a subjective construction corresponding to shifting contingencies of culture and history, with nothing "real" beneath it? Are the epistemic norms of science guaranteed to lead us to a knowledge of this world, and if so why? Or are the epistemic norms also simply part of culture in the end, on a par with the metaphors of science? I worry about these questions [which Ruse obviously feels are the right ones], and now candor forces me to admit that—on the evidence we have—one could reasonably argue for either realism or nonrealism!

That is, one can make a case for Karl Popper who believes that there is indeed a "real world" out there. We may never know it exactly, but (in Ruse's words) "'truth' is the correspondence of our ideas with this world, and the aim and method of science is to approach such truth, if only asymptotically"; or one can make an equally compelling case for Thomas Kuhn who believes that "there is no reality other than that seen through and created by the paradigm." His fair-mindedness (if that is what Ruse's waffling comes to) reminds me of the Yiddish joke about the rabbi who listens to a couple seeking a divorce. The husband begins first, outlining his grievances (she is a lousy cook, a sloppy housekeeper, etc.). The rabbi gazes thoughtfully at the ceiling and proclaims, "You're right!" He then goes on to hear what the maligned wife has to say (her husband is a lazy bum, and beats her to boot), and after giving the ceiling another look, announces: "You're right!" "But rabbi," a witness interjects, "how can they both be right?" Stroking his beard, the rabbi sidesteps the contradiction with this playful retort: "*Nu*, so you're also right!"

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If Hacking takes up the pros and cons of socially constructing damn near everything, Ruse at least has the advantage of focusing squarely on evolution. *Mystery of Mysteries* not only follows the twists and turns of the long debate about evolution, but it also provides lively portraits of the major participants. Here, for example, is a snippet from the section devoted to Charles Darwin:

> Start with religion. . . .The young Darwin moved from Christianity to deism, and evolution was for him, as for his grandfather, a confirmation of his religious position rather than an anomaly. This was the philosophy of the *Origin*: "Authors of the highest eminence seem to be fully satisfied with the view that each species has been independently created. To my mind it accords better with what we know of the laws impressed on matter by the Creator, that the production and extinction of the past and present inhabitants of the world should have been due to secondary causes, like those determining the birth and death of the individual." Later in life, particularly under the influence of Huxley, Darwin's beliefs faded into agnosticism. Even then, however, he did not go through the *Origin* systematically removing references to God.

Ruse provides equally compelling (and balanced) portraits of contemporaries such as Stephen Jay Gould and Edward O. Wilson. The result is a study that charts the progress of thinking about evolution and that shows how what was once a debate became a bitter dispute. Here it might be helpful to think of evolution as a kaleidoscope. Turn the cylinder one way and its shapes arrange themselves into one pattern; give it a quarter twist and you end up with something else, equally plausible so far as Ruse is concerned. My hunch is that Hacking would feel much the same way—that is, if we substituted one social construction of x for another.

Both Hacking and Ruse provide insider information delivered from a vantage point well above the fray that the science wars have produced. My hunch is that those on either side of the aisle will be unhappy with at least some of their observations—that is not only to be expected, but applauded. The consequences of science are simply too important for scientists and nonscientists alike to settle for tunnel vision, half-truths, and gobbledygook.

Sanford Pinsker

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Variants of Enthusiasm

THE CONSECRATION OF THE WRITER, 1750–1830. By Paul Bénichou. Translated by Mark K. Jensen. University of Nebraska. $65.00.

IN RECENT YEARS there has been an extended and sometimes strident debate about the Enlightenment. Was it a predominantly good or bad development? How different was it in different countries? Who were the leading figures? Though many scholars have concluded that there were several "Enlightenments," some continue to make generalizations about *the* Enlightenment and speak about the "Enlightenment agenda." The notion that the Enlightenment refers to a relatively coherent body of thought is especially strong among critics of the period, who associate the era with modernity—a vague notion that refers to a wide variety of negative developments: the loss of community, secular humanism, laissez-faire capitalism, Marxism-Leninism, materialism, consumerism, scientism, rationalism. In *Endgames: Questions in Late Modern Political Thought* (1977), John Gray argues that the "Enlightenment project" conflated modernization with westernization and hoped to institute "a dreary modern utopia."

In *The Consecration of the Writer, 1750–1830*, which was first published in France in 1973, the French literary scholar Paul Bénichou, who taught for many years at Harvard, also speaks of *the* Enlightenment; he argues that during this period there was a dramatic elevation of the status of writers. The men of letters we call the *philosophes*, he says, "were promulgating a new faith, which they wished to be less dogmatic than the old one, but just as positive, and their critique of the old faith was only an instrument of the new."

Bénichou is less concerned with the Enlightenment, however, than with French romanticism, which he says was deeply influenced by Enlightenment thought. Although the royalist romantic writers of the early nineteenth century attacked the *philosophes*, they too consecrated the writer, but it was the poet they consecrated, not the *philosophe*. "The distinctive trait of romanticism," Bénichou says,

> is surely the exaltation of poetry, now considered to be truth, religion, and the illumination of our destiny, and ranked as the highest value: it is scarcely an exaggeration to say that nothing like this had ever been thought of before. The inspired writer replaced, as the priest's successor, the *philosophe* of the preceding era.

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Bénichou finds the consecration of the writer disturbing. "How is it that literature. . .can be capable of assuming such a role?" But for the most part he charts this development rather than attacking it.

Bénichou acknowledges that liberal romantic writers of the period, who were not as hostile to the *philosophes* as the royalists were, did not generally have such an exalted view of the poet. Many liberals thought poetry flourished only in primitive times, and that the advancement of civilization meant the inevitable decline of poetry. But Bénichou persuasively argues that both the liberals, who were critical of traditional religion, and the royalists, who supported traditional religion, subscribed to a "secular spiritualism" that drew its strength from an appreciation of the beauties of art and nature. And this secular spiritualism, he says, had its origins in the eighteenth-century worship of sensibility: the widespread assumption that aesthetes—those who are receptive to the beauties of art—are likely to be more moral and even more spiritual than philistines. (Jane Austen went against the current, for she regarded the man or woman of sensibility as a somewhat ludicrous figure.)

According to Bénichou, the key word that connects the Enlightenment with the romantics is enthusiasm—a word that in mid-eighteenth-century France and Britain increasingly came to have a positive meaning. In Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary* the third definition of enthusiasm is: "elevation of fancy; exaltation of ideas." Both romantic royalists and romantic liberals, Bénichou says, celebrated enthusiasm. In the writings of Madame de Staël "poetry and religion are nearly synonymous. . .being properly speaking neither poetry nor religion, but variants of the enthusiasm that is at the heart of her credo." De Staël herself says that "enthusiasm gathers together different feelings, enthusiasm is the incense of the earth climbing toward heaven, it joins one to the other." The romantic writers, Bénichou says, became "theologians of enthusiasm" who hoped art would bring about the spiritual renewal of society. Yet as the century progressed most writers—especially the poets—began to despair of their mission, regarding bourgeois society as unredeemable. After the July 1830 revolution, "the incompatibility of romanticism and bourgeois values becomes shockingly obvious."

Bénichou supports his argument with extensive quotations from a wide range of early nineteenth-century French writers. He looks at well-known figures—de Staël, Constant, Hugo, Lamartine, de Vigny, Sainte-Beuve—but he also looks at obscure writers who he says are "justly forgotten." At times the survey of writers becomes tedious, but we need to keep in mind that this is a work of intellectual history, not literary criticism, so Bénichou would be giving a misleading portrait of the age

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if he only sampled the best writers. "Literature in the following pages," Bénichou says in his introduction, "is considered principally as a carrier of ideas." He is well aware of the danger of making poetry serve as raw material for intellectual history, but he argues that poets don't live in an intellectual vacuum; they are influenced by other poets but also by the ideas of essayists and philosophers.

The case Bénichou makes for the growth of an "enthusiastic" clerisy in nineteenth-century France is a strong one, but his argument that the romantics were indebted to Enlightenment thought is not completely convincing. Enlightenment thought, as Daniel Roche says in *France in the Enlightenment* (1998), is not uniform; there were several "distinct currents of thought." The worship of sensibility that Bénichou speaks of has its source in Rousseau—not in Diderot or Voltaire. Diderot did praise those who were receptive to the beauties of art, but he did not equate sensibility with spirituality. Voltaire sneered at Rousseau's enthusiasm and proto-romantic primitivism. Did Voltaire and Diderot see themselves as sages who were promulgating a new faith? It's hard to say, but it would seem that they were mainly concerned with weakening the influence of the old faith. As Voltaire said: *écrasez l'infâme*.

Bénichou is also off the mark when he says that "literature and authors are everywhere. . .promoted to a remarkably prestigious role." In eighteenth-century Britain writers were not viewed as sages who promulgated a new faith. Nor did they view themselves that way. More important, the leading eighteenth-century British writers took a very dim view of enthusiasm, which they associated with radical Protestantism. Hume, Smith, Johnson, and Gibbon attacked enthusiasm as a threat to political stability. And in *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1791), Burke attacked what he called the secular enthusiasm of the revolutionaries. To be sure, there is William Blake. He was a poet-sage who definitely was an enthusiast, but he was not a well-known writer. In Britain we have to wait until the nineteenth century to see the consecration of some writers—most notably Wordsworth and Carlyle, who were regarded by many as sages dispensing a spiritualism akin to the spiritualism of the French romantics.

Finally, one wishes Bénichou had devoted more time to clarifying his reservations about the consecration of the writer. Bénichou seems to agree with Lionel Trilling, who in a seminal essay, "The Fate of Pleasure," refers to "the spiritual competition" that "our high culture" promotes. Trilling says modern literature promotes a "violently subversive spirituality [which]. . .has the power of arming us against, and setting us apart from, all in the general culture that we hate and fear." Bénichou

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and Trilling are talking about the same phenomenon: a secular spiritualism that holds art sacred while it scorns bourgeois life as profane.

Both Bénichou and Trilling, I think, make too much of this enthusiastic clerisy. Just as there are many currents in Enlightenment thought, so there are many currents in post-romantic and modernist thought, and not all romantic and post-romantic writers regarded themselves as sages. Even if many writers did regard themselves in such an exalted way, they were not necessarily hostile to bourgeois society. Yeats and Rilke are in the hostile camp, but Whitman and Stevens are not.

Are writers still consecrated in France and elsewhere? I rather doubt it. In the English-speaking world, it seems clear that the enthusiastic clerisy is a diminished thing. Far from consecrating writers, whatever clerisy we do have seems less interested in the wisdom of writers than in their lives. We want to know about their sordid or dreary lives, which is why lengthy biographies of very minor writers—Anne Sexton for example—sell well.

But if writers are not consecrated, secular spiritualism is alive and well, for it is found not only in motivational books that promise the reader health, wealth, and longevity if he or she becomes a spiritual person, but it is also found in the innumerable writing programs that exist in the United States. "Poetry offers a spiritual core for society that seems to lack one," the director of a California writing workshop said recently. In the U.S. there are more than 300 degree-granting programs in creative writing and more than 359 writers' conferences, seminars, and workshops. So write a poem or short story or memoir about how *your father was a bastard and your mother was. . .whatever, and you* will be transformed into a spiritual person. In the romantic period, as Bénichou suggests, art was taken too seriously, becoming a substitute for religion; now art is fast becoming a trivial activity—weekend therapy for aging baby boomers.

Stephen Miller

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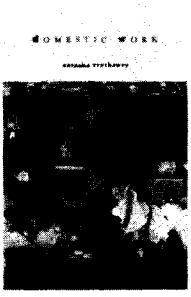

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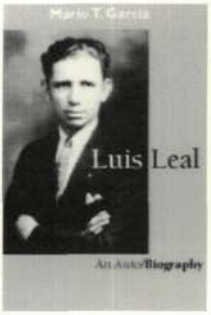

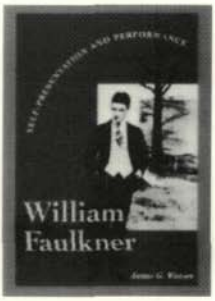

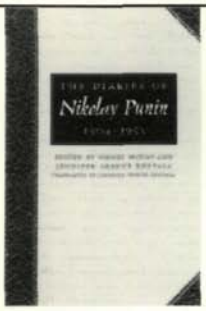

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